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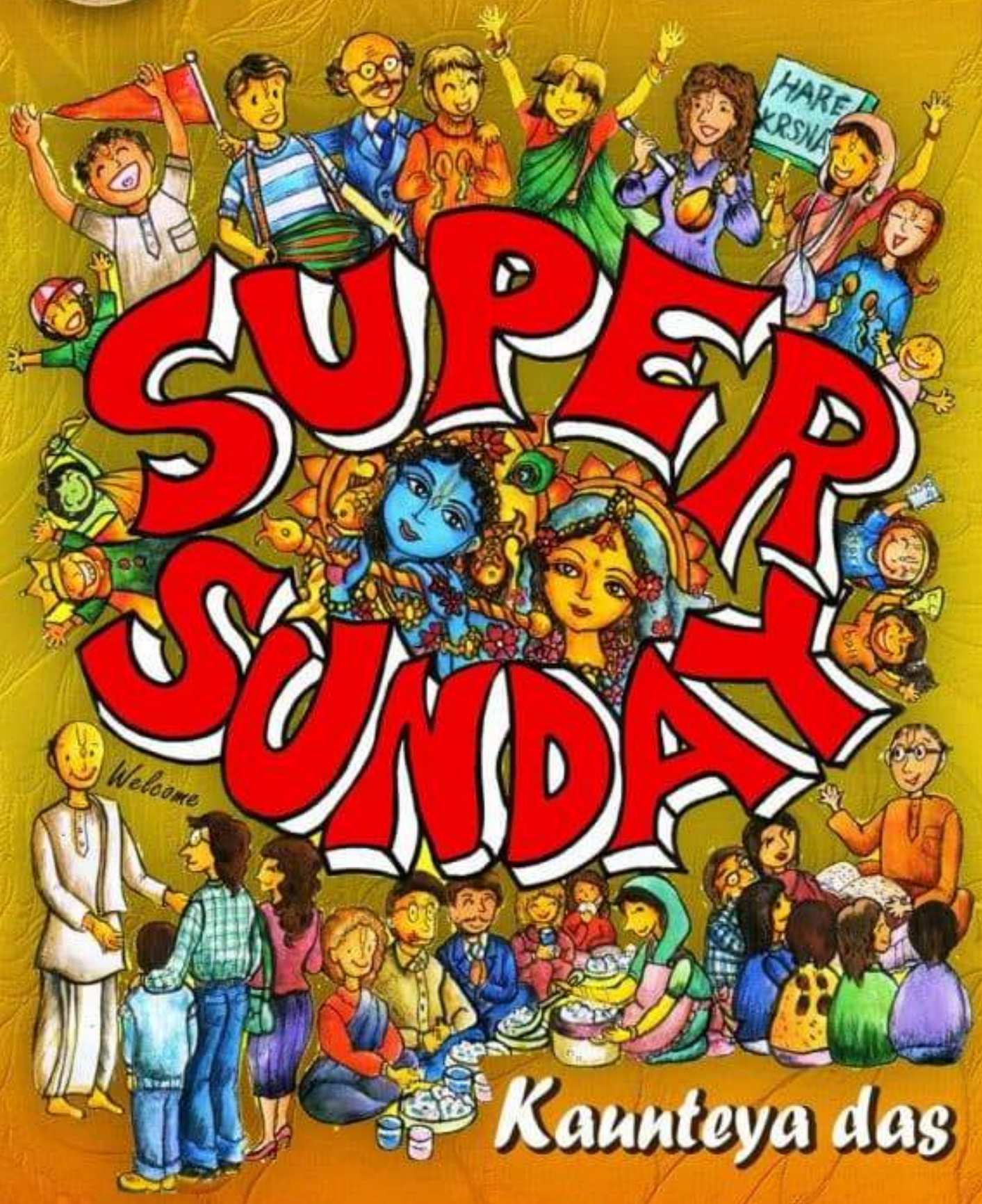
Founder - *Acarya*: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY



SUPER SUNDAY

Kaunteya das

Super Sunday

Super Sunday

Kaunteya Dasa

ISKCON
Congregational Development
Ministry

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Dedication

To anyone who,
at any time, washed pots
after the Sunday Love Feast

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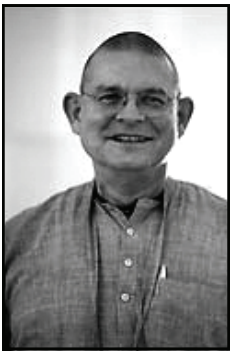
Introduction

Muslims on Friday, Jews on Saturday, Christians on Sunday—they all rest from their work routine and attend religious services. Every faithful person should use the weekly holiday for remembering God and advancing on the spiritual path. Although every day is sacred to *bhakti-yogīs,* Śrīla Prabhupāda used the potential offered by Sunday in the Western world and conceived the Sunday Love Feast. Everywhere in ISKCON the Sunday program represents an important tradition in the Vaiṣṇava community and has proven to be a powerful preaching tool.

Most devotees are already working hard to make the Sunday program a success. But can it be improved? Are there any guidelines that could render it more effective? Are we always clear on what we aim to achieve by our Sunday efforts? This booklet explores these issues, and we hope you will find some useful principles and ideas herein. Our intention is to inspire a deep analysis of what is taking place, with the goal of making the Sunday program a richer, more fulfilling experience for everyone involved.

KAUNTEYA DAS
Secretary, ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry

Foreword



To you who hold this little book by Kaunteya Prabhu in hand: congratulations on your good fortune. Focused on "the Sunday Feast"—one of the core programs established by Śrīla Prabhupāda for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness—*Super Sunday* will much improve the quality of life for three groups of readers. There are those responsible for planning, organizing, and executing the weekly festival: your service will become more effective, productive, and satisfying in itself. Then there are those who simply attend the Sunday feast: you will have a much better time, spiritually and materially. (This book will tell you why and how.) And for those whose service or interests focus elsewhere, read this book anyway. It evinces devotional qualities and presents spiritual principles in action that any devotee will profit from.

Kaunteya Prabhu's work is instructive and pleasing to read. It is pervaded by a union of two important qualities: infectious enthusiasm and critical self-awareness. *Super Sunday* not only exhibits the productive union of the two, but it also guides us in their practical application in revitalizing a specific program. What is learned can be applied in any service. The progress of our movement in all areas depends greatly upon this vital combination in action.

Super Sunday covers every aspect of the weekly festival, and it is filled with concrete examples and anecdotes—from inside ISKCON and outside—that illustrate what is to be done and not to be done. It contains throughout many thought-provoking statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda exemplified in the highest degree *caring for peo-*

ple. The weekly festival is the time, as Kaunteya Prabhu shows, that this core principle should be applied to all varieties of people who come into the Lord's own place. At every moment each guest should tangibly feel, through the devotees, the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's and Prabhupāda's care for them. Kaunteya Prabhu is our guide for making it happen.

A story: Dayānanda Prabhu was the president of ISKCON Los Angeles when Śrīla Prabhupāda purchased from a Christian minister the church on Watseka Avenue that became—and still is—our ISKCON temple. Dayānanda Prabhu once told me how Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed him that our new temple should become the place of worship for all the residents in the surrounding neighborhood. They should become our congregation. Prabhupāda therefore gave instructions that the church pews—the long wooden benches in Christian churches the congregation sits on—should be left as they were. Those coming for our Sunday feast would sit there, as they are accustomed, for the lecture. The "temple room" was to go in another large space in back (now the site of the FATE museum). In this way Śrīla Prabhupāda graciously and thoughtfully wanted to make Kṛṣṇa consciousness accessible to the neighbors. So Prabhupāda became quite displeased when the local devotees took out the pews anyway. Did they want to be more authentically Kṛṣṇa conscious? Did they carry over some counter-culture attitudes to the sold bourgeois citizens of the neighborhood? In any case, they apparently did not know how to be authentically Kṛṣṇa conscious in their care for people.

Super Sunday is very much in the spirit and practice of Śrīla Prabhupāda's thoughtful compassion. I am grateful to Kaunteya Prabhu for so carefully carrying forward along this line, and I am sure you will be too.

RAVĪNDRA SVARŪPA DĀS

Chapter One

Ritualism: The Number One Enemy of the Sunday Program

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Ritualism: The Number One Enemy of the Sunday Program

The dictionary defines *ritual* as "an established procedure for a religious or other rite; observance of set forms in public worship." The mind can develop an exaggerated attachment to established procedures; thus in running the Sunday program we might fall into the trap of giving sacred status to non-absolute formulas. We might end up doing things in the same way only because "it has always been done like that."

Let's focus on any aspect of the Sunday program and consider whether we handle it in the best possible way: how we invite and treat guests, how we present the philosophy, how we introduce new people to the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra,* how we plan and deliver the lecture, the activities we offer children (if any), how we deal with shoes and coats, how we arrange the seating, when and how we distribute *prasādam,* and so on.

We will first consider timing. A devotee from Finland once told me about her experience in Greece. In this sunny Mediterranean country, between two and five in the afternoon everyone sleeps; this national siesta is non-negotiable. Therefore she suggested that the Sunday program start when people have returned to external consciousness. This would appear a rational, if not obvious, proposal, but the German *brahmacāri* in charge knew better. He refused to change: "The Sunday program must start at four o'clock!"

That is what he had learned, and he was not about to adapt the schedule to fit the present circumstances (as if failure to begin at four o'clock would contravene a subtle but inviolable cosmic law and bring only misfortune). Never mind that at four o'clock people would still be napping and the temple would be deserted.

What is your situation in this regard? Is the timing of the Sunday program suitable for the intended audience? Would it perhaps be better to reschedule the program from the afternoon to the

morning, or vice versa? What about starting around noon? Did you ever consult your congregation to see what they prefer? In some places devotees found Saturday evening to be the most effective time for their program. Another option is to have programs on both Saturdays and Sundays.

> **Jayādvaita**: "In New York so many people are coming, they want to start a Saturday feast also."
> **Śrīla Prabhupāda**: "Do it." [1]

Devotees in Melbourne, Australia, have been doing it for at least ten years.

For Whom and for What Purpose?

Having stressed the need to be open to change, I suggest that organizers of the Sunday program ask themselves two basic questions:

1. Who is the Sunday program for?
2. What are we trying to accomplish?

Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized the importance of clear objectives: "There is example: 'Man without any aim is ship without any rudder.' . . . Aeroplane is going with a aim to land in some country, but if he goes on simply without any aim, then there will be disaster. . . . Without goal, practicing something, it is foolishness." [2]

First of all, you might want to consider the intended participants; their level of development and their needs will shape the aims

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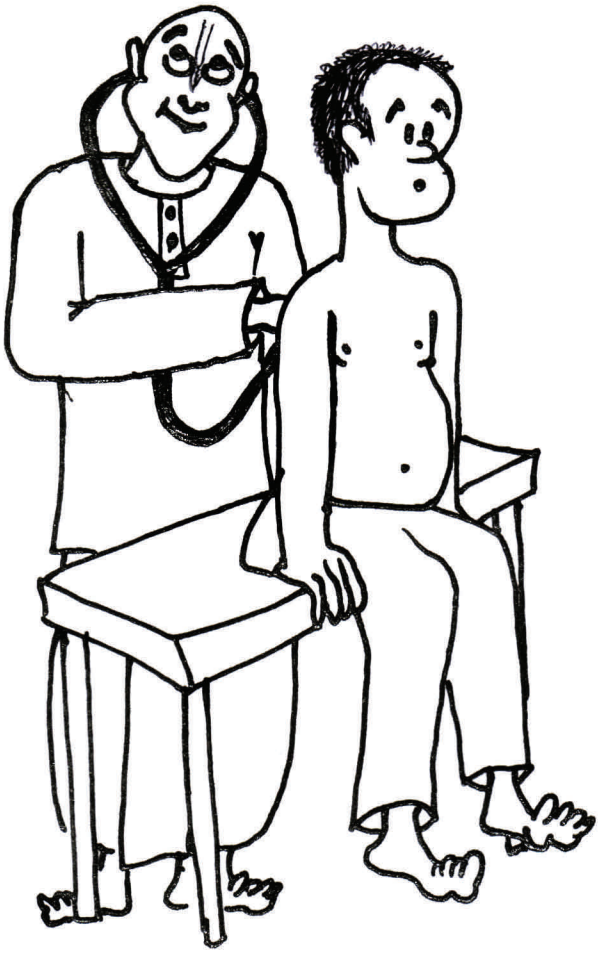
1 Morning Walk, Māyāpur, 6 April 1975.
2 Conversation, Paris, 13 June 1974.

of your program. The analysis of the candidate is fundamental. As Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "First of all, we have to know where he is. Then we can give. What is his position? Then we can give him. Just like diagnosis. You have to see what is the disease. Then we give medicine." [3]



Sunday program attendees might fit into three broad categories:

1. Devotees—those who have already accepted the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and are practicing at various levels of individual commitment.

2. Seekers—those who do not yet identify as followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya but are attracted to know more about the Hare Krishna movement, with different motivations and degrees of interest.

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3 Conversation, Bhubaneswar, 21 January 1977.

3. Vagabonds—the unclean and unsightly vagrants interested only in the free food. [4]

Oblivious to spiritual instruction, vagabonds merely desire to fill their belly (a legitimate motivation on their part, but not our main reason for having the Sunday program). The main problem is that their presence (often involving stench, filth, and the reek of al-

[4] This is a sensitive topic, to be approached with an open mind, free from undue sentimentality. I do not suggest to discriminate against the homeless and the dispossessed as a class. I am not implying that they should be considered unfit candidates for Vaiṣṇavism. In this category I include exclusively those who manifest no interest for any other aspect of Kṛṣṇa consciousness besides *prasādam* and, more importantly, whose presence could potentially drive away other visitors.

cohol) is quite effective in repulsing respectable people, who would start seeing the temple as a hot spot for social misfits, unsafe and unsuitable for their families. As a result, we lose the good and keep the bad. Wouldn't it be better to devise a separate means, at a different time or place, for feeding vagabonds? Shouldn't we protect our Sunday program from loss of reputation and attendance? Some strategies to consider: charging for *prasādam; prasādam* "by invitation only"; a security arrangement to inform vagabonds that (at the moment) their presence is not welcome.

Viṣṇu-māyā Prabhu writes about the Sunday Feast in Wellington, New Zealand:

> Although tha Gaura Yoga Centre is for everyone, we do use discrimination when allowing people in the door. If you are likely to cause a disturbance by the way you look, smell, or have previously been a nuisance, and that it is likely to inhibit other "normal" people from coming back, then a tactful refusal at the door is a policy that we use. Of course, no one leaves, despite their make-up, without getting some *prasādam*. We have some toffee fudge for every guest that comes. . . . It is an easier atmosphere for all when the crazies are eliminated. And it is no loss or diminution because they get to taste food that has been offered to Kṛṣṇa. [5]

Mercy to everyone? Yes. Mercy to everyone in the same way and at the same time and place? No, thanks.

Many years ago in the Rome temple, a controversy once arose over letting a vagabond attend the Sunday program. Probably the dirtiest man in the world, certainly a carrier of disease and foul odor, his habit was to eat directly from garbage cans. I remember the apprehensive, perturbed faces of the guests when, oblivious to his surroundings, he would eerily enter the temple garden with his zombie-like gait. Once he even brought his girlfriend. She also wore dark greasy rags, and her skin was also covered with a brownish crust of dirt. If the presence of vagabonds keeps away the ladies and gentlemen, better we keep away the vagabonds.

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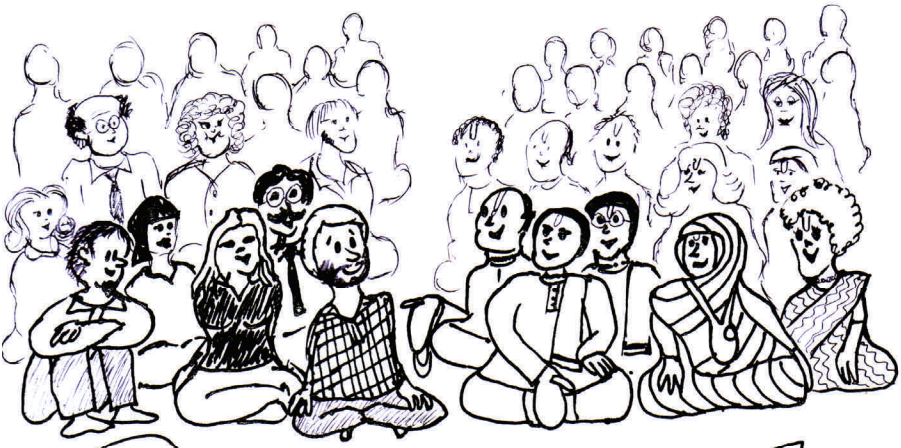
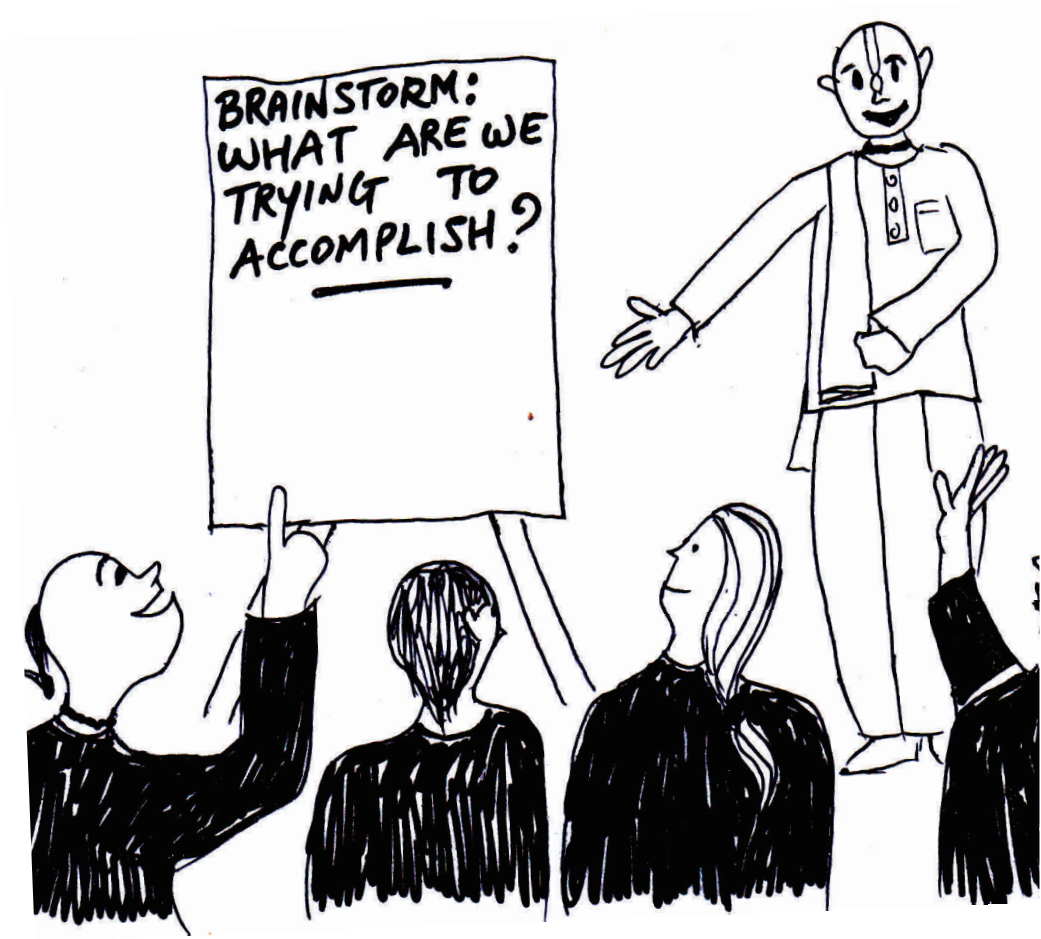
5 From: www.visnumaya.info "visnu-maya waxes lyrical - sane memoirs from an insane world!"

2 AUDIENCES?



2 LECTURES!

Returning to the first question, Who is the Sunday program for? my answer is: for devotees and seekers. But, and this is a crucial point, each group has different motivations and expectations. We cannot satisfy the needs of practicing devotees by catering only to the needs of seekers. And (you guessed it) we cannot satisfy seekers' needs by catering only to those of devotees. Dealing with both groups in the same way may result in disappointing both.



Devotees come to worship the Lord, whereas seekers might not (some might even disbelieve in God). Devotees can sing the usual Sanskrit and Bengali songs; seekers cannot. Devotees know devotional terminology and vocabulary; seekers don't. Devotees already know and accept the philosophy; seekers don't. Devotees are accustomed to taking their shoes off and sitting on the floor; seekers aren't. Seekers may have many questions on most elementary issues; devotees don't. Seekers need to be convinced to practice *bhakti-yoga,* whereas devotees need inspiration to continue with enthusiasm, and also training on how to meet the challenges of spiritual life. The list of differences goes on.

Separate lectures for devotees and seekers, for instance, could make a big difference in everyone's experience of the Sunday program. In other cases it might be better to have an altogether separate program for new people, inviting them to a gathering designed with their needs in mind, scheduled at a different time from the gathering for people already committed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Since every temple and preaching center has different facilities and manpower, organizers should avoid doing things in routine fashion. Rather, devotees should thoughtfully plan the Sunday program according to the needs of the participants. We should be clear on what experience we want to offer both devotees and seekers. Discussing with representatives from both groups and doing some brainstorming can generate many good ideas.

Children: Smaller-size Bodies, Same-size Souls, Different Needs

Notwithstanding some noteworthy and praiseworthy exceptions, children are often neglected in our Sunday programs. One reason could be that younger, unmarried temple residents don't fully grasp the dynamics of family life or don't realize that children

are valuable members of any community, members who deserve utmost attention. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote: "Child is the father of man, so the basic principle of any type of life is to instruct to the children from the very beginning." [6]

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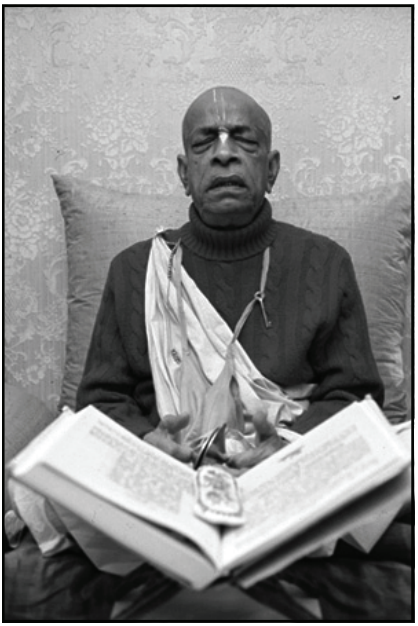
6 Letter to Haṁsadūta, 22 January 1968.

Neglecting children generates negative consequences in at least two ways. One is immediate: attendance at the Sunday program will drop. The second is long-term: if we fail to offer pleasant and instructive engagements to children, we sow seeds for their becoming alienated. If we fail to properly minister to children, we should not be surprised if sooner or later they reject the temple experience. In deciding where to go on Sunday, the first consideration of parents is, "Will the children be kept busy?" (In London I was once a guest in the home of a Gujarati family. The parents told me how much they loved coming to the temple, but for their three children—age four, seven, and nine—there wasn't much to do. During summer, the children could play on the lawn, but in winter they were confined inside the temple building. They felt bored and out of place in the crowded rooms. The parents told me that often they reluctantly decided not to go to the temple on Sundays, to avoid disruption.) If at the temple there is nothing for the children to do, and no special place for them to meet

and play, parents will be reluctant to bring them. Since parents will feel embarrassed when their children create a disturbance during the lecture, they might decide to stay home or go elsewhere, to a more child-friendly place. This important idea in the form of a *sutra:*

If you get the child, you'll get the whole family;
if you lose the child, you've lost the entire family.



If we can offer attractive activities for children, the whole family will feel more inclined to come. It is natural psychology that if the child is happy, the mother is satisfied, and when the wife is pleased, the husband feels good. Consider McDonald's: their buSINess is to sell hamburgers, not baby-sit; but to sell more, they build an amusement area for children, thus making it easier and more appealing for families to "stop and shop."

Then there is the essential aspect of education, about which Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

> This Krishna consciousness should be taught from the very beginning. Just like we send small children to nursery school, or preliminary, primary schools. Similarly, because that is the age, receptive age. So Krishna consciousness should be taught from that childhood age. Therefore I wanted that on Sunday, let people send their children here and we shall teach Krishna consciousness." [7]

The Sunday program provides the special opportunity to train children, and we shouldn't miss that chance. Some temples have already organized Sunday School with a curriculum offering several years of learning and lots of fun.

We should also not underestimate the preaching potential of children. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote: "People are very much interested in hearing philosophy when it is spoken by a child." [8]

At the Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha temple in Chowpatty, Mumbai, India, children give speeches during the Sunday program. They

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7 Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.6.1, Montreal, 10 June 1968.

8 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.2.36, purport

begin preparing several weeks before the event, and on the day of their presentation you can be sure that the entire extended family will attend, eagerly anticipating the performance. This method keeps children engaged in an edifying and unforgettable way while also attracting and instructing the adults (a characteristic common to other features of the Sunday program, such as puppet theatre).

In summary, if children feel unwelcome or rejected at our Sunday program, they are likely to develop deep aversion to the Hare Krishna movement. But if in childhood they develop the taste for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that affinity will endure throughout their entire life, to their eternal benefit. Since children will, upon becoming adults, assume important roles in the future of our Society, to neglect them is an unpardonable spiritual and strategic mistake.

Chapter Two

The Lecture

Chapter Two

The Lecture

In the previous chapter I proposed that we analyze our public. This is especially relevant to the lecture, an essential aspect of the Sunday program. Frankly speaking, in this area there is ample room for improvement. How much room? Approximately the size of Bhū-maṇḍala. But let us proceed orderly.

Whom Are We Lecturing To?

First we should understand our audience (a fundamental principle of education in general), as their needs should shape the lecture. What do they already know? What do they need to learn? In the case of new people, what is their present attitude toward Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Even expert speakers admit that the Sunday lecture is one of the most difficult speaking tasks because of the wide spectrum of consciousness among the visitors. At a typical Sunday program you'll see new guests sitting alongside seasoned devotees. If you speak on advanced topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a way that presupposes acceptance and knowledge of Vedic scripture, the guests may wonder, "What is he talking about?" But if you target the guests the devotees will be bored: "We've heard that a zillion times!"

What to do? One solution is to speak so eloquently and expertly (and purely) that both regulars and newcomers will be charmed and enchanted. Another avenue is to split the audience and give one lecture for the devotees, another for the seekers. It could be that simple. But amazingly, only very few temples have adopted this policy. In Prabhupadadesh, Italy, devotees started holding Sunday seminars for the congregation—as single lessons or short series—while in another room new guests were introduced to the basics of

Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Appreciative that the temple administration had fine-tuned the lecture to their spiritual needs, the congregation began reciprocating by attending in larger numbers.

ISKCON Bangalore, Śrī Jagannātha Mandir, offers three simultaneous speeches on Sunday: an English *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class for seasoned devotees; and two *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures—one in English, for beginners, and one in Kannada (the local language) for the general audience.

Sermons for Morons and Shrinking Attendance

If we continually try to convince our congregation of the elementary aspects of the *Bhāgavata* philosophy when they are already fully convinced, we insult their intelligence; if we try to convert the converted, we insult their faith; if we preach about the importance of starting to chant to those who already chant, we insult their practice. It's no wonder that many senior members of the congregation either attend the Sunday program only reluctantly, or altogether stop coming.

We Hare Krishnas aren't the only ones facing such issues. Once a Christian pastor had a problem—fewer and fewer parishioners were turning up for his sermons. He loved to preach from the Bible and was certainly well read, but the attendance kept dwindling, and the huge gothic cathedral grew gloomier with the passing of each Sunday. When eventually the church became nearly empty, the dejected pastor approached a friend for advice. "What are you preaching about?" asked the friend. "Well, for the past two years," the pastor said, "I have been discussing that most stimulating section on how to build biblical sacrificial altars. These chapters give exact specifications for the design, and I am explaining all the fine points of the original Hebrew and Greek versions. Very interesting!" The friend could immediately understand why the congregation had stopped congregating. He gave his advice, clear and to the point:

"Who cares about building biblical altars? You should focus on the real needs of the audience!" The good priest meditated on the suggestion, and then announced the title of his next sermon: "What to Do if You Think You Have Married the Wrong Person." Next Sunday, the church was filled with two thousand people.

We should find out what's on people's minds and address *that*. Relevance is the key factor. We should not just reheat some stereotyped doctrinal soup, dump it in our congregation's mental bowls, and expect them to enjoy swallowing it week after week after

week. "But Prabhu," I hear the detractors object, "it is always good to repeat the basic ideas. We should stress the elementary concepts again and again because in Kali-yuga people forget so quickly!" This might indeed be a legitimate concern, but it's dishonest to use it as an excuse for laziness and pastoral incompetence.

I keep hearing the same complaint again and again: "Just see! People arrive only after the lecture, just on time for *prasādam*." But whose fault is it? Granted, a few might simply be after the food, but if we offered them stimulating speeches many would love to come earlier to listen and learn. When people dodge the lecture, chances are that we are presenting the most exciting philosophy in a most unexciting way. How would you feel if someone invited you for lunch but didn't prepare anything, if when you arrived he began searching the cupboards and fridge, hastily gathering food scraps to improvise a meal? Don't we often act similarly in regard to the Sunday lecture? Don't we often invite people to come and listen but fail to present them interesting talks? People arrive only after the lecture, just before *prasādam*? Perhaps our lectures are flatter than the chapatis.

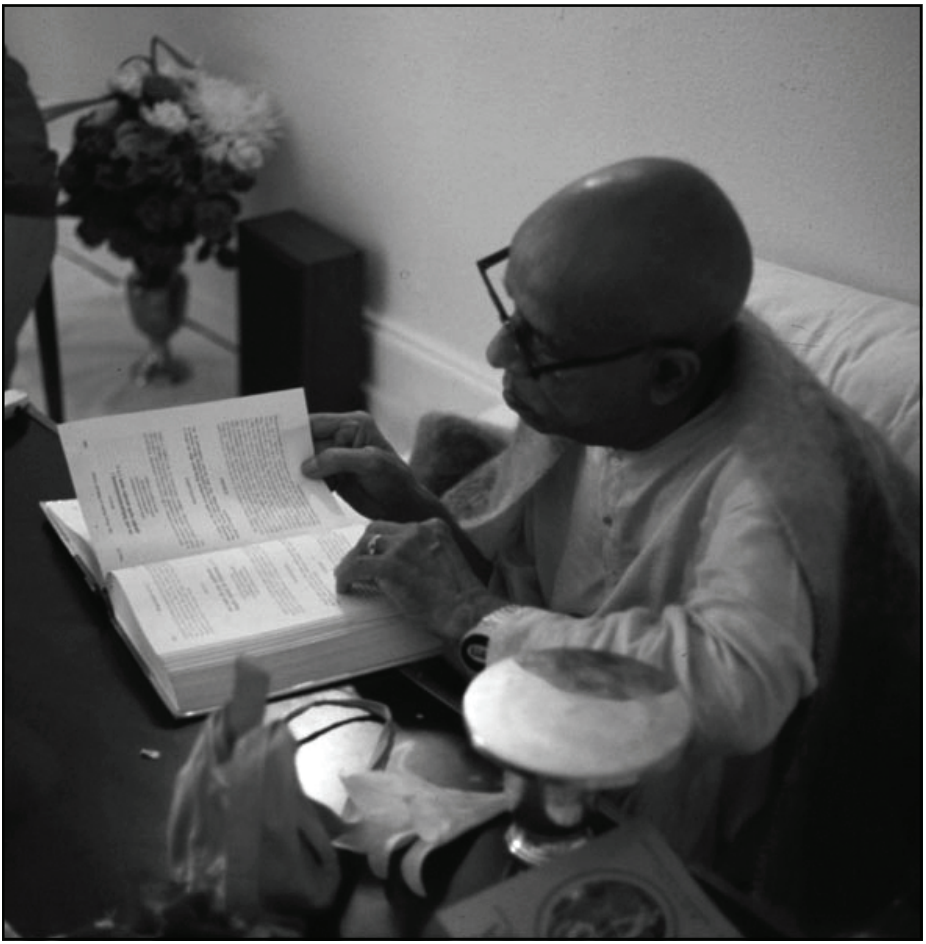
After inviting devotees and seekers to come and hear from us, we have the moral obligation to give them something attractive. To attend the Sunday program they might have traveled from afar. They have renounced television, movies, or other entertainment. They sacrificed spending time with friends and family. Don't they deserve a quality experience, including a first-class lecture?

Yato Gur, Tato Mishti

It's a Bengali saying of universal application: how much

sugar you put, that much sweetness you get. Good quality requires good effort. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote: "Everyone can become a first-class speaker. Simply cram the purports of my books. The references are there, the philosophy is there. Everything is there. So if you do it, everyone will be pleased with your speaking." [9]

Yet in that same year, Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed his disappointment at the lack of learning among his disciples: "My only criticism of the devotees is that they think my books are for distribution and not for reading." [10]



The best preparation for lecturing is serious ongoing study of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Still, even accomplished scholars might not always have at their fingertips (or at their neuron-tips) all information on every topic. Therefore, our suggestion is that it's best to *plan* the lecture, especially the Sunday lecture, which could be so influential in the audience's life. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote: "So far your question, yes, it is good to be prepared with a well-thought lecture in advance." [11]

If we research in advance the topic of our lecture, we can uncover a treasure of references, ideas, analogies, and stories that will

9 Letter to Gopījanavallabha, 19 September 1974.

10 Conversation, Melbourne, 1974, as reported by Bhūrijana Prabhu in *My Glorious Master,* p. 242.

help us give a richer and more authoritative presentation. If we spend time meditating on that topic, we can discover new insights; the lecture will grow within us. If we prepare carefully, it is more likely that our speech will be more colorful, powerful, understandable, and attractive. To be fair, in the same letter just quoted, wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda commended preparation, he also wrote: "However, we must be able to preach effectively at a moment's notice or under any conditions or circumstances also." [12]

Notwithstanding, this principle hardly applies to the Sunday speech (we can easily calculate the dates of all Sundays in the next ten thousand years). Moreover, the circumstances of the Sunday lecture are largely predictable, thus there is no sound justification for being caught off-guard—"Oh, in five minutes I have to preach to three hundred guests! What a surprise!" And giving the speaker only "a moment's notice" before the Sunday lecture could indicate poor management and disregard for the public.

In America, a Christian pastor might invest up to twenty hours a week preparing his Sunday sermon. Twenty hours! Almost three hours a day. Why so much time and energy to prepare a sixty-minute talk? Because that talk will be *important* for the congregation. That talk must sustain their faith and practice for the next seven days, so it should be stimulating, instructive, and entertaining. Same for us—our congregation doesn't attend daily *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* classes. In many cases the Sunday lecture is the only live philosophical talk they will hear that week; therefore it must be good.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote: "One should at once quote from scriptural authority to back up what he is saying. At the same time, such talk should be very pleasurable to the ear." [13]

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11 Letter to Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī, 1 July 1972.

12 ibid.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Śrīla Prabhupāda explained: "[The speaker] must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. . . . It should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience." [14]

So, "very pleasurable," "suitable," "interesting"—the speech should be dynamic and enjoyable (and fully in line with Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*).

To get our points across we can also use audiovisual aids—a picture is worth a thousand words. Props such as flipcharts, slideshows, and PowerPoint presentations help the audience stay focused and absorb our message, and we should utilize them whenever feasible. Even Nārada Muni used multimedia while preaching to Mahārāja Prācīnabarhiṣat: "Nārada Muni wanted to instruct the King about the real purpose of life and invoke a spirit of renunciation in his heart. . . . Consequently, by his mystic power Nārada Muni showed King Prācīnabarhiṣat the dead animals which he had sacrificed." [15]

13 *Bhagavad-gītā* 17.15, purport.
14 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.4.1, purport.

"O ruler of the citizens, my dear King, please see in the sky those animals which you have sacrificed without compassion." [16]

We might not possess Nārada Muni's mystic powers, but we can follow in his footsteps by using computers and projectors.

Once, while stuck for eleven hours on an airplane, I watched a movie about two childhood friends—a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi. Both young and resourceful, as soon as they take over the pulpit of the church and synagogue and start delivering fresh energetic speeches, the attendance swells until the places are packed. (Later, both clergymen get into trouble for an unexpected romance with an old acquaintance—but that's another story.) The point is that churchgoers, synagogue-goers, or temple-goers do react to the quality of the preaching, by attending and listening or by staying at home.

To get results requires hard work—no pain no gain. In Denver, Colorado, two disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Apūrva Prabhu and Mother Kamalinī, joined Toastmasters International. During the hour-long weekly meetings, they worked on making their speeches more lively and articulate. They learned to get rid of all unpleasant redundant sounds that infest speech (the *um*s, *hem*s, and *you know*s). Among other skills, they also focused on gesturing naturally and structuring their talks using effective openings and closures. This married couple affords a good example of preachers eager to be-

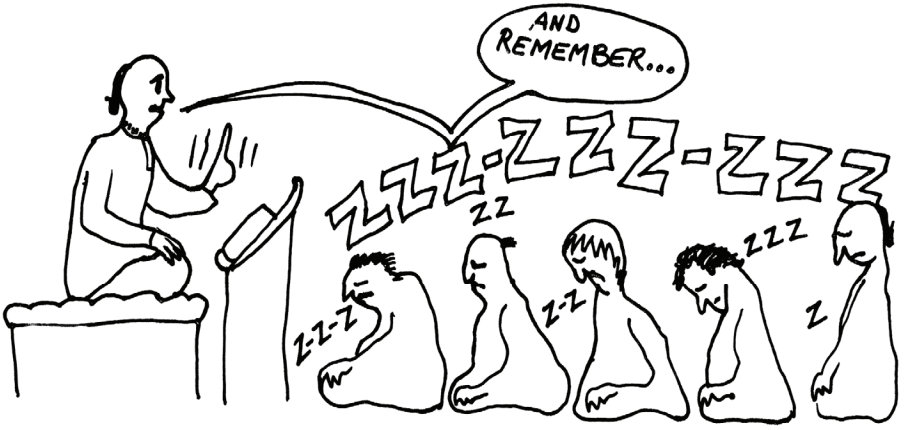
15 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.25.7, purport.

16 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.25.7, translation.

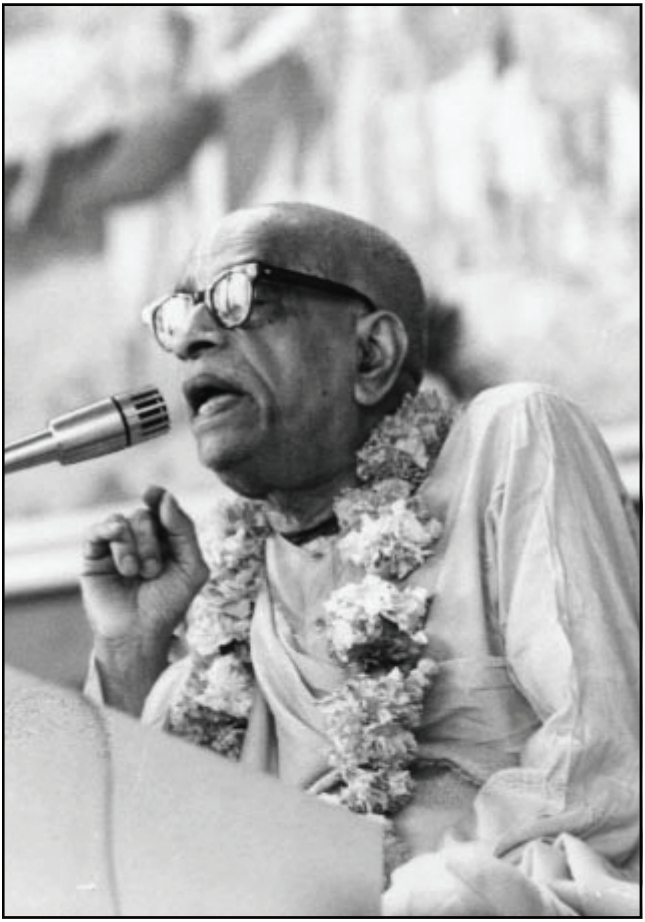
come more competent and compelling communicators. For those who might not feel inclined to join a public-speaking club, there are books and courses—some written by devotees—that can help improve one's public speaking. [17]

The Length

The Sunday lecture is often too long, seriously testing the average human being's attention span. Many people opt for skipping the trial altogether (or end up sleeping through it). I have visited temples that set aside a full ninety minutes for the lecture. Sixty minutes is customary. In ISKCON Detroit I saw a smart move: the Sunday class lasts thirty minutes, including the singing of "Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava," the reading of Sanskrit, translation, and purport, *and* the lecture. There's nothing wrong with longer speeches, but they should deliver a clear message with substance and impact.



17 For instance, Bhūrijana Prabhu's book *The Art of Teaching*, contains a few chapters on the art of lecturing. The seminars Teacher Training Course (I & II) by the VTE (Vaiṣṇava Training and Education) include public speaking. The Congregational Development Ministry's Congregational Trainer Course has a section on speaking skills.



"Thank you very much."

"But," someone might ask, "what about speakers who don't warm up until forty-five minutes into the lecture?" No problem. Have them start lecturing in the dressing room, alone, forty-five minutes before they sit on the *vyāsāsana*.

Length is not synonymous with strength. Look at Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures: fifteen to twenty minutes, sometimes twenty-five or thirty, and *bās,* it's over—

The Art of Talking to the Congregation

Part of our work at the ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry is to study what other religious groups do, to learn from their successes and pitfalls. I now share an experience I had

while passing through Singapore. In this Southeast Asian country thrives the Faith Community Baptist Church, a Christian Cell Church, which requires all members to be part of small groups and focus on proselytizing.

While in Singapore I checked out their bookstore. I spent three hours perusing the shelves and bought 150 dollars worth of goods, including videos, books, and training curriculums. It was Saturday afternoon and that evening Senior Pastor Reverend Lawrence Khong, was scheduled to give the lecture. I had seen him on video and knew him as a powerful speaker and visionary strategist. I decided to attend.

Camouflaged in my civilian clothes, I entered the auditorium (I had a freshly shaved head, so I kept my cap on, even inside). The hall was a cinema before the Church purchased it to accommodate its expanding congregation. The atmosphere was relaxed, free from the stiffness often associated with religion. Even before stepping inside I bumped into something instructive: an affable man at the door handed me a little booklet that contained the program's schedule. He told me they printed ten thousand copies every week to give free to all attendees. The pamphlet contained the timings of the events, title of the lecture, name of the speaker, and name of the lead singer. It also gave the exact number of people who attended on the previous week, a financial report, and a list of all those who were baptized during the past seven days, along with their cell leader's name. It included a Bible verse to memorize during the coming week, announcements of special programs like summer camps and seminars, and a page for taking notes during the sermon (the cells would discuss it in their next weekly meeting). The small brochure was a very informative piece of literature, and it showed that the Church was active and flourishing.

Before the talk, the congregation sang devotional songs—sometimes standing, other times sitting, and at times kneeling. The words of the songs were projected onto a large screen, but it seemed that everyone already knew all the hymns by heart. They sang to the

Lord, "Please show us Your face." I thought, "Well, whatever their present conception of God is, Śrī Kṛṣṇa might soon reveal His lotus face—they are asking for it!"

The pamphlet stated that that day's speech was part of a four-lesson series on successful family life. It had an intriguing title: "The Fatal Attraction." Pastor Khong (now known as Apostle Lawrence Khong) got right into it: Adultery is bad. We may call it by a French name, *affair*, to make it sound better, but adultery is sinful and Christians should avoid it by all means. He explained the psychology of it and at what age a man is more likely to yield to such temptation. The well-documented lecture entertained and informed. It was direct and uncompromising, presented with verve and humor. The pastor's tone was lively and energetic as he briskly paced the stage of the two-thousand-seat auditorium.

I looked around me. The room was packed, mostly with couples in their twenties and early thirties, but with plenty of teenagers too. All were listening attentively. They knew he was talking to them. They accepted this well-dressed, athletic, married man of forty-four as their leader. He made the ancient themes of the Bible relevant to his congregation and urged them to lead moral lives. Pastor Khong shared experiences from his own life, telling his followers of the challenges he had met. He kept pacing back and forth, waving his hands, and the audience kept listening in rapt attention.

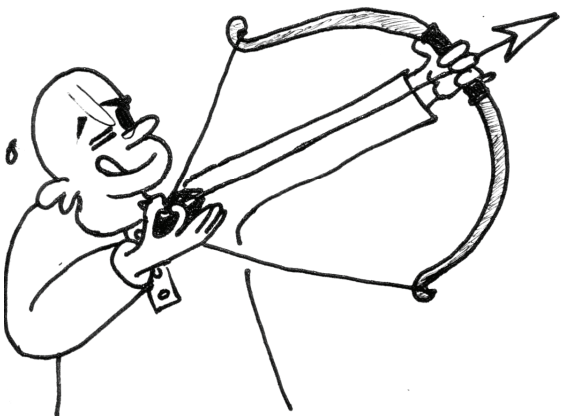
The message Pastor Khong delivered that night was empowering: "You can overcome evil and be moral." At one point I thought that every *gṛhastha* in ISKCON would benefit by hearing this lecture, so practical and specific. Pastor Khong emphasized his teachings by numbering and repeating the main points. He knew well that the congregation would discuss his speech during their next weekly cell meeting, so he made sure they got the message right. It certainly was not an improvised talk—he knew what he wanted to say and said it with conviction. (Now, many years later, I still remember main ideas and a few interesting details.)

After the sermon there was a prayer session to invoke the

Lord's help to free those still in the grips of adultery, pornography, and other unlawful sex. After that, I subconsciously expected that next would be a feast, like at ISKCON's programs—but it was over. People exited the hall into the warm Saturday evening. The following day, Sunday, the Faith Community Baptist Church would pack this auditorium four more times and Pastor Khong would deliver the same speech—three more times in English and once in Chinese—so that the whole congregation could hear. The Church's management had to divide their six thousand followers into batches because the worship center could not fit all of them.

When I passed through Singapore two years later, I learned that the Church had grown from six thousand to nine thousand members. I did the math. On the average, four new people had joined per day—every day (and they don't even give *prasādam*!)

Why don't *we* grow like that? What can we do to improve? One thing is certain: we could give better Sunday lectures.



Let's Target the Audience's Needs

How to identify what is most relevant to your listeners?

In **conversation**. While talking with members of your congregation, note the issues they bring up and what their most pressing problems are. Do they ask you how to best relate with nondevotee colleagues at work? How to avoid fights with their spouse? How to interest their neighbors in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Through **surveys**. Directly ask them. For example, during the Sunday lecture give them a piece of paper and ask them to write down the three biggest problems in their life (they need not write their name). Or ask them to complete the sentence "My main challenge in practicing spiritual life is . . ." Or you can use a more formal, planned survey-form aimed at discovering their stand on various aspects of life.

Focus on **specific groups**, according to role or age. You might ask parents: "What is the biggest obstacle you face in raising Kṛṣṇa conscious children?" Teenagers: "What scares you most about becoming an adult?" *Gṛhasthas:* "What are the greatest difficulties you face as a couple?" Devotees with unfavorable relatives: "Who in your family is supportive of your practicing *bhakti-yoga,* and who isn't? What are their reactions or objections?" Working people: "What is the biggest obstacle you face at your workplace?" And so on.

Identify their challenges and help the congregation overcome them with Kṛṣṇa conscious advice, through wisdom. They will be grateful, at least for your attention and concern. Show that you care, and demonstrate that you can offer spiritual solutions to material problems.

Chapter Three

Dramas, Puppets, & Prasādam

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Dramas

Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged devotees to perform dramas during Sunday programs. "I am pleased to learn that the Columbus center is improving gradually," he wrote in 1969, "and now you have begun to perform plays for the guests at the Sunday feasts." [18]

At that time drama was in full swing at ISKCON Los Angeles. In his book *Servant of the Servant,* His Holiness Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja wrote:

> Throughout the week we would rehearse plays dramatizing Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya's pastimes. While in college I had taken an interest in drama, and now I found that this could be dovetailed in the service of Kṛṣṇa. In Seattle I had sat with Śrīla Prabhupāda for several mornings at his house as he described the life of Lord Caitanya, which I was writing as a drama for our devotees to perform. Śrīla Prabhupāda very much appreciated our dramatic performances, as did all the guests. Although the plays were not very sophisticated—two devotees covered by a bed sheet became a cow—they were an enjoyable way of digesting the philosophy, and when Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Los Angeles, generally after each play he would speak about the subject which had been dramatized.

Several years later the tradition was still alive in Los Angeles, and the newly printed books offered more subjects for new plays. In

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18 Letter to Bhadra Bardhan, 4 December 1969.

1975, during a walk on Monday morning, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke of the Sunday drama:

> **Śrīla Prabhupāda**: That play yesterday, last evening I saw. It was very nice . . . . Now we have got *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Bhāgavatam*. If such demonstrations are done very nicely, it will be very much appreciated even by the public.
> **Gurudāsa**: Yesterday at the Love Feast they did "Pralambāsura" and the guests loved it. Wonderful.
> **Jayatīrtha**: They applauded.
> **Śrīla Prabhupāda**: They must love it. It is very nice, very nice. Organize this very nicely . . . and all over the world this will be appreciated. And now we have got so many books. From the book you get subject matter and make a playwright in all languages. It will be very nice." [19]

It seems to me that, on the average, Russian devotees are best at theatrical performances. Although often materially poor, they are rich in artistic talent and creativity.

Traditionally, by watching dramas, even simple people while having fun could imbibe spiritual knowledge and values. In the First Canto of Śrī*mad-Bhāgavatam* Śrīla Prabhupāda explained:

> Even one hundred years ago in India, all dramatic performances were centered around the superhuman activities of the Supreme Lord. The common people would be verily entertained by the performances of dramas, and *yatra* parties played wonderfully on the superhuman activities of the Lord, and thus even the illiterate agriculturist would be a participant in the knowledge of Vedic litera-

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19 Morning Walk, Los Angeles, 10 February 1975.

ture, despite a considerable lack of academic qualifications. Therefore, expert players in drama, dancers, singers, speakers, etc., are required for the spiritual enlightenment of the common man. [20]

Lord Caitanya Himself took part in dramas during His *gṛhastha* days: "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu used to perform dramas with Advaita Prabhu, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, and other devotees in the house of Candraśekhara." [21]

In this purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda set high standards for actors:

> Dramatic performances were also enacted during the presence of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, but the players who took part in such dramas were all pure devotees; no outsiders were allowed. The members of ISKCON should follow this example. Whenever they stage dramatic performances about the lives of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu or Lord Kṛṣṇa, the players must be pure devotees. Professional players and dramatic actors have no sense of devotional service, and therefore although they can perform very artistically, there is no life in such performances. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used to refer to such an actor as *yātrā-dale nārada,* which means "farcical Nārada." Sometimes an actor in a drama plays the part of Nārada Muni, although in his private life he is not at all like Nārada Muni because he is not a devotee. Such actors are not needed in dramatic performances about the lives of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Yet in a letter Śrīla Prabhupāda authorized minor parts for nondevotees: "While performing such dramas, always the actors must be Vaiṣṇavas. Outsiders may help but devotees should have all the major roles." [22]

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20 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.11.20, purport.

21 *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi-līlā 10.13, purport.

Thus there is scope for engaging guests. Integrating new peo-

ple in drama projects could be an effective way of linking them to the devotees and giving them a solid reason for coming back.

What about children? Engaging them in dramas could be an effective way to keep them constructively busy and to also involve their family. Playing in dramas can have a great impact on children and their relatives. The children become absorbed in Kṛṣṇa-*līlā,* feel valued by the community, and develop useful social and artistic skills; their relatives connect with the temple by getting the chance to help stage the performance. And the public is always charmed.

Apparently Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn't much fond of elaborate outfits: "Make everything very simple, without too much fancy costumes, and the real message will come out very nicely." [23]

Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed "catching their ears" more than catching their eyes:

> Emphasis should be given to the words of Bhagavatam, they are spiritual and will have powerful effect if someone only hears them with attention, do not be very much enamored by fancy costumes and stage-decorations, they will only distract. Real acting art is to know how to speak. The greatest dramas, even in your western culture, they can be played without any extra equipment. Just like your Shakespeare—sometime I saw they were playing one drama, I think Hamlet or something like that, and only two men were there on the bare stage and everyone was praising. So the art is catching their ears. Now in that spirit go on with your work and try to do something wonderful. [24]

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22 Letter to Vrindaban Candra, 13 April 1971.

23 Letter to Nayanābhirāma, 22 December 1971.

Śrīla Prabhupāda supported the use of recorded tapes instead of having the actors speaking live:

> **Śrīla Prabhupāda**: We have got so many boys and girls. They can play simply. And they haven't got to speak. This system is very nice. Let them play. What is this called, system?
> **Hṛdayānanda**: Narration.
> **Śrīla Prabhupāda**: No, there is . . .
> **Jayatīrtha**: Like pantomime.
> **Gurudāsa**: Mime.
> **Śrīla Prabhupāda**: Even they play with tape. The tape is going on, and they are playing. [25]

Śrīla Prabhupāda also spoke of having a narrator off-stage while the players perform, especially in the case of a language barrier: "Dramas are alright if you can perform them nicely. Even if you don't speak them in English, they can be rendered into Hindi on the microphone while the drama goes on." [26]

Śrīla Prabhupāda warned that Kṛṣṇa's personal pastimes should be presented carefully, otherwise better to show something else:

> So far these plays are concerned, they are not meant for ordinary people and if they laugh, then that is a great offense. Just like in your play "Putana Killed" there was so much laughing. So these plays are not meant for the public showing unless they are very nicely done. The audience must give grave attention. If they laugh, that is the

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24 Letter to Jayadharma, 13 December 1972.
25 Morning Walk, Los Angeles, 10 February 1975.
26 Letter to Akṣayānanda Mahārāja, 13 January 1976.

greatest offense. Lord Caitanya never played before ordinary men. Only before devotees. But for you to put on such plays for devotees only is not so practical. So plays of Krishna Lila should be avoided, unless it is very gravely performed.*

Hoping this will meet you in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

*Some instructive stories from Bhagavatam may be played before the general public.

You can find more instructions on drama performances and concrete guidance for your theatrical projects in the book *Kṛṣṇa Conscious Play Scripts* (included in the Bhaktivedanta VedaBase, FOLIO [27]), a "collection of 88 transcendental dramas assembled and presented for the pleasure of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda," by Rādhā Dāmodara Prabhu and Daśaratha Suta Prabhu.[28]

"Everyone enjoys play-acting. . . . So this drama-playing is very good presentation for attracting their attention and displaying Krishna Consciousness very beautifully."[29]

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Puppet Shows

Puppets exist in various types: hand, rod, and string, as well as shadow figures, and come to life through the hands and voice of the puppeteer. "It is very nice that you are preparing these puppet stories of Śrī*mad-Bhāgavatam*," Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote. "Such program will not fail to have an uplifting effect upon the viewers as well as the players. So do this nicely, it shall be very good." [30]

Actually even Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma Themselves studied puppetry while in the ashram of Sāndīpani Muni: "They learned . . . how to manipulate thin threads for dancing puppets." [31]

Puppetry appeals to all age groups. I remember how excited

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27 Version 2003.1, section 26.

28 If you don't have access to the Bhaktivedanta VedaBase you can find the collection at www.cedarpost.com/krsnaconsciousplays.

29 Letter to Nayanābhirāma, 22 December 1971.

30 Letter to Harer Nāma, 1st December 1968.

31 *Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Ch. 44, "Kṛṣṇa Recovers the Son of His Teacher."*

the Italian Consul General in Calcutta became when during a semi-official visit to Māyāpur we invited him to watch a puppet show. He fondly reminisced about watching puppet shows in his childhood. Seeing this elderly diplomat eagerly watching the show about Lord Caitanya's childhood pastimes offered us a glimpse of the power and universal appeal of puppetry.

In *Servant of the Servant*, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja described the 1969 Sunday programs in Los Angeles:

> We also put on puppet shows, of which the story of Prahlāda Mahārāja was everyone's favorite. Viṣṇujana portrayed such a furious Hiraṇyakaśipu that everyone became fearful, and Śrīla Prabhupāda said that his performance in that play was the best of all. In fact, after watching the show, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in a letter, "Please inform Gurudasa that in Los Angeles temple, Visnujana, Tamala Krishna, Silavati, and her son, Birbhadra played a puppet show yesterday on the occasion of my spiritual master's advent day. The subject of demonstration was the story of Prahlada. It was so very nice and perfect that everyone joined in chanting Hare Krishna. I hope that some time in the future they will be able to demonstrate many such spiritual themes for puppet shows, and people will be greatly benefited." [32]

The conclusion, in Śrīla Prabhupāda words: "In all festivals, if you make such puppet show, then you will be able to attract so many people." [33]

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32 Letter to Mr. Jim Doody, 8 February 1969.

33 Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, 1st June, 1969.

Prasādam

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "I made this movement successful simply by Love Feast. They did not come to hear Hare Krishna. They came for Love Feast. From very beginning, when I was in 26 2nd Avenue, every Sunday I was giving nice foodstuff, at least two hundred men. Daily at least more than fifteen, twenty. I was cooking myself. That is the beginning of my movement." [34]

The purification coming from honoring Krishna *prasādam* might not be immediately visible, but it's there. "You should take sympathy with every living being," Śrīla Prabhupāda said on another occasion, "that he is part and parcel of Krishna. . . . These boys are inviting outsider, 'Come on,' this Love Feast. What is the idea? The idea, let them come, take little *prasādam,* and it will act someday in Krishna consciousness. It will act." [35]

What can I say about *prasādam* that you don't already know? Which temple doesn't already have *prasādam* during the Sunday program? Every devotee has already heard instructions by Śrīla Prabhupāda such as "Induce them to chant and take *prasāda*. You'll be successful." [36]

Every devotee knows—often from personal experience—how essential *prasādam* distribution is in the overall missionary strategy.

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: *Prasādam* distribution is very important?

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34 Conversation, Hyderabad, 10 December 1976.
35 Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.25-9, Los Angeles, 18 February 1969.
36 Conversation, Vṛndāvana, 12 September 1976.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: When people taste the Sunday Love Feast at the temple, it's so nice that they want to give up their meat-eating.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: At least, they express that sentiment.

Srila Prabhupāda: No, they'll do if they are continually eating. [37]

There is no doubt about the importance of *prasādam*. But one question might remain: Should we charge for Sunday *prasādam*? In some places the issue is still debated. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, in *Servant of the Servant,* described that in 1969 the Los Angeles temple, authorized by Śrīla Prabhupāda, did charge a fee:

> One thousand invitations were distributed every week, with the contents changed to suit whatever play was being presented or special event being celebrated. This system attracted many respectable families in addition to the usual hippy crowd, so with Prabhupāda's permission, we began to charge an admission fee. For $1.25, a person could enjoy four to five hours of first-class entertainment: a play, *kīrtana,* a lecture, and at last a sumptuous fifteen-course feast. It was a bargain by any standard!

Obviously pleased, Śrīla Prabhupāda, praised the whole operation during a *Bhāgavatam* class:

> In our Los Angeles temple they have made very nice puppet show, and people are appreciating very much. Even they are selling ticket at the rate of one dollar fifty cent, still, people are coming. Last Sunday I was present, and

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37 Morning Walk, Māyāpur, 6 April 1975.

they invited, distributed pamphlets, and more than a hundred people came, and they participated with the *kīrtana* very nicely, they heard the lecture, and the function was for two hours. Still, they kept very busy themselves in eating *prasādam*, in seeing the puppet show and the cinema of Ratha-yātrā. So many things. It was very successful. And they collected about more than $150. So things have to be organized.[38]

So, Śrīla Prabhupāda did approve of charging, and even promoted the idea. Yet, less than a year later, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, who by then had moved to London: "I approve your scheme not to charge money for love-feast. Whatever voluntary contribution you receive, that is alright."[39]

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38 Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.8, Hawaii, 21 March 1969.

39 Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa, 12 January 1970.

Therefore support exists for both approaches, and each temple should decide according to its situation. In Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Londonīśvara Temple, Soho Street, London, the devotees decided to distribute, before the Sunday lecture, coupons for a free *prasādam* feast, and those who come after must pay.

Advertising on the web their Sunday "Krishnafest," devotees of The Loft in Auckland, New Zealand, inform that the program starts at five o'clock and entry is four dollars; but it's six dollars for those coming after five-thirty. [40]

40 www.theloft.org.nz.

Chapter Four

The Guests Are the Gist

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Guests are *the* reason for holding the Sunday program. But we might tend to forget this or act as if we have forgotten. I have witnessed widespread weakness in devotees' dealings with visitors, so I hope that by openly sharing my observations someone might be inspired to do better. The aim is improvement, not condemnation.

One definition of *guest* is "one who receives the hospitality of another person or of an organization." *Hospitality* is defined as "kindness in welcoming strangers or guests." An important part of Kṛṣṇa conscious culture is how to treat guests. Śrīla Prabhupāda's said:

> India's philosophy is *gṛhaṁ śatrum api prāptaṁ viśvastam akuto 'bhayam*. That is India's philosophy. "Even the enemy comes to your place, you should receive him so nicely that he will forget that he is your enemy." That is India's philosophy. *Gṛhaṁ śatrum api prāptaṁ*. What to speak of friend, even if you get your enemy, you shall receive him. That is India's hospitality. [41]

The Sanskrit word for guest, *atithi*, carries additional mean-

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41 Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.20, Vrindavana, 8 November 1976.

ing:

> *Atithi* means uninvited guest, hospitality. If somebody comes at your home without your invitation, he is called *atithi*. *Tithi* means particular time and date. But a person arrives at your home without any invitation on particular time and date, he is called *atithi*. *Atithi-satkāra* [honoring the guest]. This is also one of the items of Vedic culture. *Atithi-satkāra*. [42]

Uninvited guests certainly test our adherence to the "law of reception," [(43)] but the Sunday program is an event we ourselves invite people to, so we should be doubly prepared to serve them with proper attention. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has only stern words for inhospitality: "Homes from which guests go away without having been received even with an offering of a little water are like those holes in the field which are the homes of jackals." [44]

A negative attitude towards guests carries frightening consequences: "A householder who receives guests or visitors with cruel glances, as if to burn them to ashes, is put into the hell called Paryāvartana, where he is gazed at by hard-eyed vultures, herons, crows and similar birds, which suddenly swoop down and pluck out his eyes with great force." [45]

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42 Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.1.56-7, Bombay, 14 August 1975.

43 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.18.28, purport.

44 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.16.7, translation.

45 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.26.35, translation.

Neglect or mistreatment of visitors earns unpalatable reactions: "Any person who does not receive or feed a guest properly but who personally enjoys eating is put into the hell known as Kṛmibhojana. There an unlimited number of worms and insects continuously bite him. . . A person who shows unwarranted wrath toward a guest in his house is put into the hell called Paryāvartana."[46]

Along with shining examples of abnegation and hospitality, we could also cite a number of less-than-ideal dealings. *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmrta* reports a famous case of foolish behavior in receiving a guest. [47]

In 1966 Mr. Larry Bogart, who worked at the United Nations Headquarters, had agreed to visit Śrīla Prabhupāda at 26 2nd Avenue, New York:

> Prabhupāda regarded Mr. Bogart's imminent visit as very important, and he wanted to cook for him personally and receive him in his apartment with the best hos-

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46 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* Fifth Canto, ch. 26, "A Description of the Hellish Planets," from the Chapter Summary.

47 *Prabhupāda-līlāmrta,* ch. 19, "Planting the Seed."

pitality. When the day arrived, Prabhupāda and Keith cooked together in the small kitchen for several hours, making the best Indian delicacies. Prabhupāda posted Stanley downstairs and told him not to allow anyone to come up while he was cooking the feast for Mr. Bogart. Stanley assented, blinking his eyes with his far-off "saintly" look.

Stanley stationed himself downstairs in the storefront. A few of the boys were there, and he told them, "You can't go up to see the Swami—no one can." About twelve noon, Larry Bogart arrived, pale, elderly, and well dressed, by Lower East Side standards. He said he wanted to see Swami Bhaktivedanta. "Sorry," Stanley informed him, his boyish face trying to impress the stranger with the seriousness of the order, "the Swami is busy now, and he said no one can see him." Mr. Bogart decided he would wait. There was no chair in the storefront, but Stanley brought him a folding chair. It was a hot day. Mr. Bogart looked at his watch several times. A half hour passed. Stanley sat chanting and sometimes staring off blankly. After an hour, Mr. Bogart asked if he could see the Swami now. Stanley assured him that he could not, and Mr. Bogart left in a huff.

Upstairs, Swamiji had become anxious, wondering why Mr. Bogart had not arrived. Finally, he sent Keith downstairs, and Stanley told him about the man whom he had turned away. "What?" Keith exploded. "But that was . . ." Within moments, Swamiji heard what had happened. He became furious. He came down to the storefront: "You fool! You silly fool!"

We Need to Be Intelli-gentle

No doubt, ISKCON devotees work very hard for the benefit of Sunday guests. Devotees rent or purchase a place, often with great personal sacrifice, then print invitations and circulate them; they buy *bhoga* and cook for hours; they serve the feast and clean everything at the end—all done week after week, month after month, year after year. Devotees thus offer outstanding examples of selflessness, love for humanity, and loyalty to the tradition established by Śrīla Prabhupāda. This transcendental toil is certainly commendable.

But sometimes improving performance depends on working smarter, not harder. For instance, we might benefit by stopping for a few minutes to consider, "What are we trying to achieve by having the Sunday program? How to reach those objectives? What experience are we offering our guests, and can we make it more rewarding? How can we inspire new people to become regular visitors? Brainstorming on such issues might reveal some useful insights. In many cases, improving our service to guests won't even require spending more money, for often it's just a matter of managing existing resources more thoughtfully and creatively.

First of all we need to consider that we are dealing with at least two types of guests: newcomers and regulars. (For example, first-timers might sorely need an introductory class on the basics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but the same class might bore old-timers into a state of suspended animation). Each type has specific needs and characteristics. Therefore what is ideal for one could be ill-suited for the other.

Apply the same mold
for the new and for the old,
and the effect is foretold:
failure will unfold.

Our efforts should include analyzing the schedule of events through the eyes of our visitors.

Cultural Conciliation: Looking for Compatible Principles

In India, where it's customary to sit cross-legged and eat with one's hand, it is perfectly all right to put a plate of food on the floor in front of a guest, with no spoon or fork, whereas in the West a guest might feel inconvenienced by this, both physically and mentally (it might even remind him of the way dogs are fed). A positive example shown by devotees of Helsinki, Finland, is to give Sunday guests the choice of sitting on normal chairs at normal tables, sitting on cushions around lower tables, or sitting on pads on the floor in the temple room. This makes it easier for the non-acclimatized (and those with joint pain) to feel comfortable and peacefully enjoy the *prasādam*. Nonetheless, in your situation, serving *prasādam* on the floor might still be the best choice. But it should be chosen deliberately after considering all options, not merely done out of habit or carelessness. In the following excerpt Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke about how to serve guests (in Māyāpur, India):

> **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa**: Everyone will come to take *prasādam*.
> **Śrīla Prabhupāda**: Keep nice water, sitting place. They will take.
> **Tamāla Kṛṣṇa**: What kind of sitting place? On the floor with mats, or benches and tables?
> **Śrīla Prabhupāda**: Benches, table, will be nice. [48]

Things can be done one way or another, but we should apply

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48 Conversation, Māyāpur, 19 January 1976.

our intelligence and think how people will react, especially newcomers, who might never return if they find the experience too taxing. There are principles and details. In this case, giving Kṛṣṇa-*prasādam* is the principle, how the *prasādam* is served is a detail. But how people feel is not a detail. We might fulfill the aim of giving the guests *prasādam,* but fall short in making them feel comfortable.

Another example: the principle is to give the holy name, but if in *kīrtana* an overly exuberant new recruit sings and dances like a madman, guests might think, "What's going on here? This stuff is not for me."

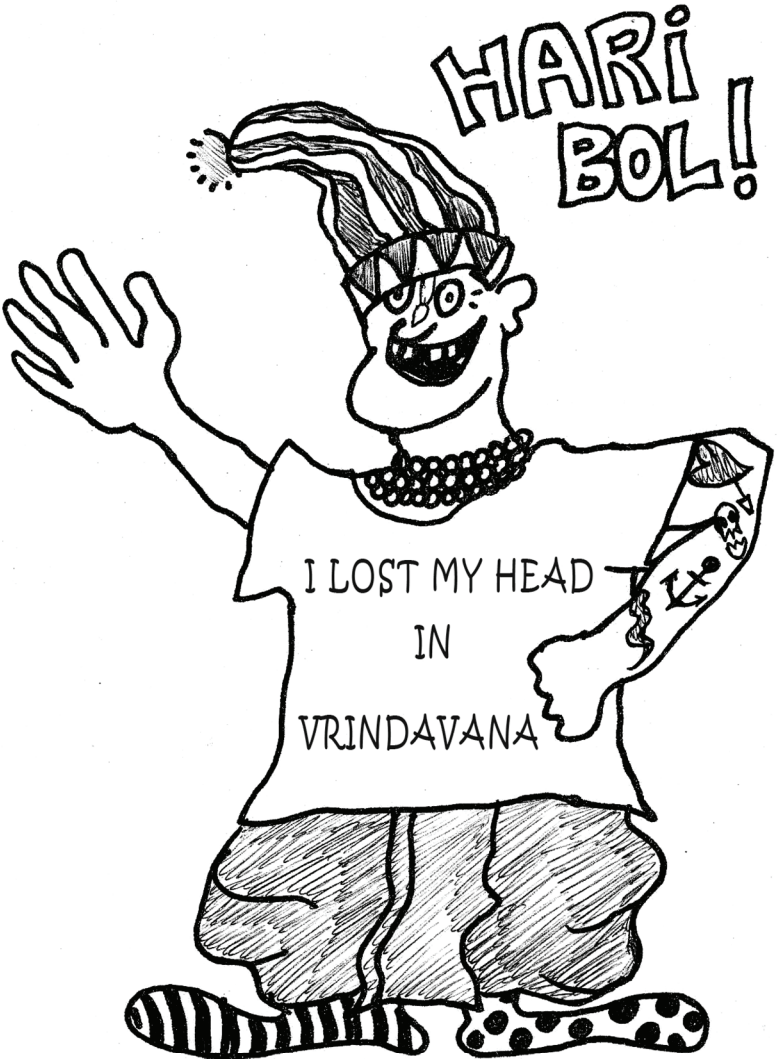
Dress Code

At one point in ISKCON's history there was an isolated and disastrous attempt at redesigning our clothing to make it look like the robes of Christian monks. Friar-like beards appeared on previously clean-shaven faces, and church music replaced traditional Vaiṣṇava melodies. These mutations were introduced on the assumption that people of Christian upbringing would thus more easily accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But the results did not validate the approach. Anyway, we are not proposing anything like that, yet devotees should meditate on how to help people adjust to the foreign environment at our centers.

Recently I met an initiated lady devotee who, although she wears a sari during the morning program, chooses to wear regular Western dress to the Sunday program, to help guests relate to her. We are not promoting this as a worldwide standard, but do appreciate her approach as sensible and thoughtful.

Whatever clothing style you choose, please keep in mind—together with the need for cleanliness—some general guidelines for

acceptable dress. Sattvic, agreeable color combinations are preferable to loud, discordant aggregates. We recommend matching socks (same color, length, and texture, and even better if both socks be-



long to the same original pair). Decent, chaste dressing solutions are preferable to skimpy, suggestive garments. Pictorial t-shirts should display mottos and images compatible with Kṛṣṇa consciousness (not like the devotee I once saw wearing, in the temple room, a t-shirt with the name and logo of a cigarette brand). Better to replace extravagant headgear, footgear, and ornamentations, with more sober, sedate articles. Could I suggest that, if possible, tattoos—especially when gaudy and atrocious—be kept covered?

The expression "Sunday best" (one's best clothes, worn to church on Sunday) did not come into being by chance. Especially those devotees serving as hosts should honor the visitors and the sacredness of the occasion by wearing their best attire. Anyone dealing with the public should always remember Śrīla Prabhupāda's words "You get first dress, then address." [49]

"Welcome!" and "Well, . . . Come" Are Not the Same

In America, big supermarkets hire people just to stand at the entrance, welcome the customers with a smile, and say things like "Good evening! Thank you for coming!" We could definitely do something like that at our Sunday program, and we won't even need to hire anyone. Having a volunteer who greets visitors at the entrance would be a nice touch, but often our lack of attention is not only at the door. Unfortunately, in a few places the distinct lack of individual care for guests is the rule, not just an occasional exception. Is it rational that after the strenuous effort to open a temple, arrange the Sunday program, and invite people, then when someone

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49 Conversation, Bombay, 31 March 1977.

visits we behave as if we couldn't care less? Sometimes I wonder, "Do we really want guests to come?" Isn't it a bit "schizoid" to coax people into coming to the temple and then treat them with cold indifference?

Thank God it isn't like that everywhere. For instance, ISKCON Detroit has been outstanding in investing plenty of thought and energy into improving the reception and tending of guests. The devotees there produced a detailed plan—eleven pages of guidelines—on how to deal with guests, with directions on welcoming all visitors at the entrance (including offering a garland to first-timers), escorting them to the temple room, explaining the program (both verbally and through a pamphlet), handing everyone a *Bhagavad-gītā* before the lecture (opened to the right page), sitting together during *prasādam*, inviting them to attend individual training workshops, and following up with letters and phone calls. Of course the goal was to help newcomers feel welcome and wanted, to give them a positive experience, to inspire them to begin practicing *bhakti-yoga*, and to facilitate their integration into the Vaiṣṇava community as

active participants.

Visiting a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple *can* be a cultural shock, so we should try our best to facilitate those seekers bold enough to come. At least we should offer them the courtesy and personal attention that anyone from any background can appreciate. We should help them feel that they can fit into the Vaiṣṇava community. Newcomers should think, "These people care so much for me and have so much to offer!" Our reception should be so warm that they will consider spending the rest of their life with us.

Alone in the Crowd

At a temple in California, His Holiness Jayapatāka Mahārāja had an astonishing experience. At the end of a seminar he was giving, he noticed that a gentleman was about to leave. Mahārāja approached and asked him to take some *prasādam* from the table near the door before going. The man stopped, looked straight at Mahārāja and said, "For forty days I have been coming to the temple

every day and you're the first person who has spoken to me." That's probably worthy of the *Guinness Book of Records:* "The most days it took a religious institution—ostensibly a missionary one—to speak to a person who was daily visiting its premises." (And even then, it happened only through a visiting *sannyāsī*.)

At times also our Sunday guests feel ignored or neglected. One devotee reported, "Mostly during my summer and winter breaks from school, I had attended the Sunday program [at the aforementioned Californian temple] for the past two years before one devotee (Drutakarmā Prabhu) finally spoke to me. Maybe it was my fault for not approaching the devotees, but if it happened to me, it could happen to anyone!"

Guests might see everyone else chatting with friends while no one seems to notice them, and thus get the impression "I'm really not wanted here. These people don't care about me. Whether I am here or not, doesn't make any difference to them."

Anyway, as Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company, said, "Failure is only the opportunity to intelligently begin again."

"Take a Seat" (If Any)

Another example of cultural insensitivity (to avoid calling it "suspension of common sense") is the seating arrangement, or the lack of it, for the lecture. Often there are no chairs in the temple. Although reasonably healthy, I prefer to sit in a chair while listening to lectures; I feel more comfortable and it helps me concentrate. Therefore I find it hard to imagine that a seventy-nine-year-old woman afflicted with sciatica and osteoporosis could relish sitting for an hour cross-legged on the floor during her first visit to the temple (unless a *yoginī* in her previous life). I don't suggest asking people *if* they want a chair (not wanting to disturb, many will say no); better to place chairs *before* people arrive for the lecture. Did you ever notice that among the first sitting spots taken are those

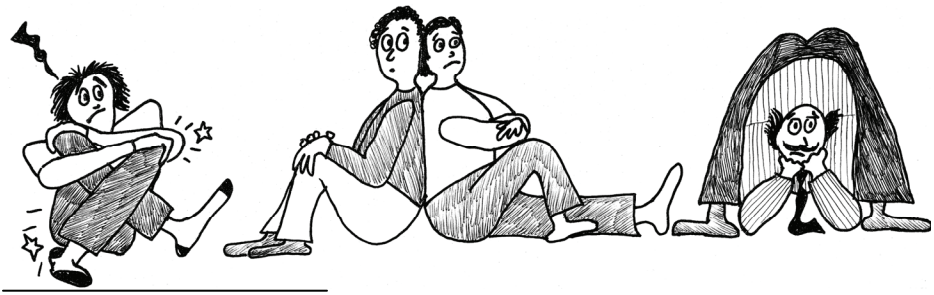
against the wall, which at least offer the relief of back support? Or did you ever notice that some of those sitting on the floor, as the lecture progresses, begin squirming and shifting their position desperately trying to get some relief? (They often end up holding their

knees with their hands, which according to *Nectar of Devotion* is an offense when done before the Deities.) I know, I know, some temples are too poor to buy or rent chairs, but Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote:

> The reception law enjoins that a poor man, who has nothing to offer his guest, should be good enough to offer a straw mat for sitting, a glass of water for drinking and some sweet words. Therefore, to receive a guest, either friend or foe, there is no expense. It is only a question of good manners. [50]

So at least bring out that chair from the *brahmacārī* room and offer it to the most elderly guest who cannot sit on a "straw mat." Have pity on him. Of course you may do as you like, but I offer two more quotations. In the first, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains to an acquaintance in India his approach in the West: "The only thing we ask visitors to leave their shoes at a specified place and sit down in the temple crosslegged. If somebody finds difficulty to sit down crosslegged, we offer him a chair." [51]

Regarding arrangements for a festival in Bombay, India, Śrīla Prabhupāda said: "Now, now, better purchase hundred chairs. So around the temple room place hundred chairs. . . . They will sit comfortable." [52]



50 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.18.28, purport.
51 Letter to Hanuman Prasad Poddar, 5 February 1970.
52 Conversation, Bombay, 20 March 1974.

Shoes Blues

Having to wade through a lagoon of shoes to find one's own—while being elbowed by others trying to achieve the same feat—can be an unnerving experience. But even more unnerving is finding that your shoes have been taken, as was the case for a guest I know whose pair of shoes worth over a hundred dollars was stolen.

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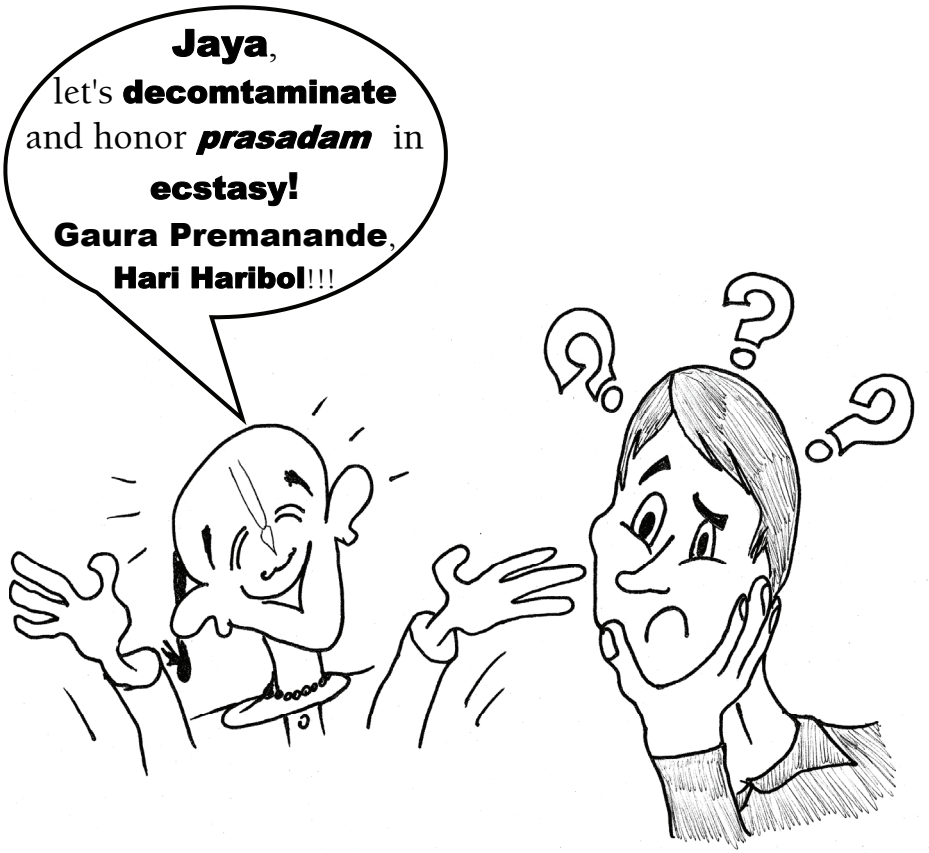
Let's try to prevent shoe-related agony by providing orderly shoe-racks or some other efficient system of shoe management. And by the way, advanced mathematical calculations and empiric observation indicate that shoe-racks designed for fifty pairs of shoes prove painfully inadequate for holding eight hundred pairs. As Lord Caitanya's movement expands, we also need to increase our capability for storing shoes.

To the Guests, Talk in English

. . . or in Korean, Croatian, Polish, Chinese, Zulu, or whatever the local language happens to be, but not in Devoteese, the notorious jargon unintelligible to the uninitiated—made of ill-timed Sanskritisms and occult ad hoc expressions—the infamous idiom that stunts communication and bestows upon us a cultic image.

I remember how once in the Rome temple it was late afternoon, almost the end of the Sunday program, and three new guests entered the temple courtyard. With a big smile, one *brahmacārī* ap-



proached them and asked, "Did you already respect?" The guests' faces showed confusion, perplexity, and incomprehension. They didn't know what to say, because they didn't know what the *brahmacārī* meant. We can imagine that they were wondering, "Whom were we supposed to have respected?" They were stuck. But the *brahmacārī*—oblivious to their predicament and to the obvious need for "translation"—kept asking, "Did you already respect?" (That is, "Did you 'honor' the *prasādam* feast?") Poor visitors! What embarrassment and inadequacy they must have felt!

Chapter Five

Moving Forward

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We wish that our new guests eventually become part of the Vaiṣṇava family. We should consider their first visit to the temple a step in the process of integrating them into the eternal devotional community. Therefore we need to follow up on their initial interest, which should gradually turn into solid attraction and involvement, progressively blossoming into wholehearted adherence to devotional service. We need to start cultivating our relation with them from the first possible opportunity.

In a seminar in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, I stressed the importance of taking the name and address of whoever shows any interest in our message, what to speak of visitors to the temple. I mentioned the example of a guest I had noticed at yesterday's Sunday program: "Do you remember that tall intelligent-looking bespectacled young man sitting in that corner?" The devotees remembered. They knew he had bought *Life Comes from Life*, had read it, had come to the Sunday program three times, and was now chanting three rounds a day. Jaya! a first-class candidate for *bhakti-yoga,* or rather, already a practitioner. The baffling thing was that no one, neither from the temple nor congregation, ever bothered to get his address, phone number, or even his name. Such a golden contact, such a ready-made devotee, but they couldn't even connect with him unless he were to visit again of his own accord.

Luckily, we also have examples that are more inspiring. (And please don't misunderstand me. I love ISKCON Nizhny Novgorod, a

small sweet temple full of mellow devotees. I look forward to visiting again and am sure that by then they will have made substantial progress in such practical matters, which aren't difficult for any sincere preacher to grasp.) A good example is the Śrī Sri Rādhā-Gopīnātha Mandir in Mumbai, India, where devotees have devised a clever method for getting contacts. At the Sunday program they announce that all first-time guests will be mailed as a gift a laminated photo of the Deities: "Just leave your name and address." It works, and it gives devotees a chance to reconnect with the first-timers, visit them, and keep building a relationship.

One method for getting names and addresses is to have a guest book and ask visitors to enter comments and personal details (but we shouldn't just keep it lying somewhere, we should ask people to write in it). You could also hand out survey forms with questions such as "How did you like the program? Any suggestion for improving?" or simply ask them to give their name and address. Some temples use cards with a list of items to tick if people are interested:

-Would you like to be invited to special programs?
-Would you like to be informed when new books come out?
-Would you like devotees to visit your home?"

Of course in these times of ruthless advertising and aggressive proselytizing, people might hesitate to give their phone number and address lest they be bombarded with constant canvassing. Therefore we must be tactful in requesting information; we need to build trust. But whatever approach we use, we should keep in touch with our visitors.

Creativity Please

His Holiness Indradyumna Mahārāja described some aspects of his Polish festival:

> Our tents included displays on vegetarianism, reincarnation, Vedic art, and spiritual science . . . even a tent exhibiting spiritual fashions, where young girls and ladies may choose a sari to wear for the duration of the festival. With the help of our ladies, the entire 250 saris are often adorning the festival participants after only two hours. Others patiently wait in line for them to be returned so

> they also can wear them. . . . Everywhere people could be seen wearing *bindis* and beautiful *gopi-dots* painted on their faces by our ladies at our *gopi-dot* booth.

Thus two ideas that can readily be used are to hand out saris and apply *gopi-dots*. Such expedients help people feel welcome and excited, and to blend culturally.

In finding new ideas, some will come from the guests' minds, others from ours. In other words, the guests' consciousness and inclinations will generate some ideas, while for others we will have to dig into our fathomless tradition, extract some items, and present them creatively. More input, directly from our founder-*ācārya:*

> On Love Feast day, supply them Krishna *prasādam*. Invite some prominent gentlemen to preside over, to become our chief guest, and in this way make propaganda. And put signboards all through the street with electric light, make the gardens very nicely.
>
> I have one suggestion, that on Sundays you make a tent in that backyard garden to accommodate many guests and provide profuse prasadam to all.
>
> Here in L.A. they have elaborate Sunday festivals and erect a tent on the front lawn. There are hours of kirtana, a philosophic lecture and lots of sumptuous prasadam distribution. Another thing is, here they have a 24 hour security guard, with pistol and holster who is in the temple at all times. So you should do this like this.

What Is the Next Step?

Try this exercise, either by yourself or with a team of like-minded devotees interested in improving your Sunday program: Examine every aspect of the program that guests experience. Evaluate each feature and ponder how to rectify or upgrade it. We did that with twenty devotees in Prabhupadadesh, Italy, by actually walking through the path the guests follow—from the public road, to the property's entrance, to the parking lot, reception area, phone booth, bathroom, temple hall, *prasādam* salon, and garden—all the while visualizing the guests' perception of the place and imagining their feelings and reactions. The group generated so many observations and ideas—from removing unsightly objects in the courtyard, to upgrading hygiene and equipment in the toilet, to fixing the door of the phone booth, to changing the doormat. And those were only a few of the minor adjustments; there were much bigger and far-reaching proposals.

Focusing on improving and discussing openly among devotees generates so much willingness, so much personal initiative and hope. In your evaluation, you might include:

Finding the temple

How easy is the temple to find for one not familiar with the vicinity? Would it be helpful to put signs on the road? Is there a map on the invitation card, and if so, is it clear enough? (For instance, I once went with a large group of devotees on *harināma* in Venice, Italy. In our particular car, all the devotees were from elsewhere. In returning to the temple, we couldn't find the way—although we had an invitation card with a map on it! The map was so inadequate that again and again we had to ask people in the street for directions.)

Internet presence

Do you have a website for your temple? Is the information about your Sunday program detailed and updated? (This might include timings, schedule, lecture title and speaker, menu of the feast, special anniversaries, and Vaiṣṇava calendar celebrations.) Is the service of donors and volunteers acknowledged?

Getting to the temple

Is public transportation satisfactory? Or should you ask the bus company to establish an extra stop near the temple? Should you arrange a pick-up point somewhere in the city, perhaps at the closest bus stop or train station? Should you mobilize volunteers who have cars to pick up people on the way?

Parking

Is there enough parking space? Is the parking area close enough to the temple? Is it safe from thieves and other dangers?

Entering the temple

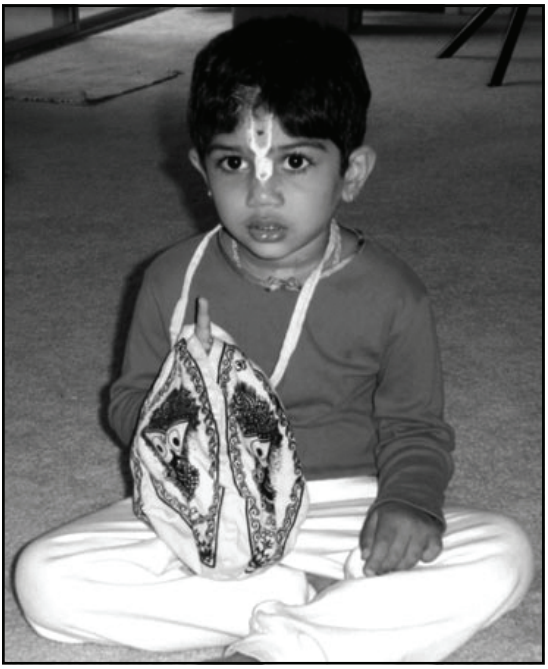
Is the temple entrance neat and clean? (If walking through it, would Śrīla Prabhupāda be pleased?) Is there an arrangement for receiving and welcoming guests? Do you provide newcomers any orientation (the program schedule, information about the movement, etc.)? Is it clear where shoes are and are not allowed? Is there enough room to orderly and safely leave them? Is there provision for people to wash their feet (they might have walked for miles in those socks)?

Facilities

Is the bathroom clean, modeling the brahminical culture we

promote? Is there toilet paper (for those unfamiliar with other cleaning methods)? Is it clear where to put plates after eating? Is the system for washing hands after *prasādam* adequate? Do we have proper first-aid equipment?

Children



Do we see children as important persons to be trained for a lifetime in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or simply as an unwanted botheration? Are we considering and planning children's education and upliftment? Are we offering them stimulating engagements—Sunday School, dramas, Kṛṣṇa conscious games, etc.—or just abandoning them, leaving them on their own? Is any responsible person taking care of them while parents listen to the lecture? Do we have a trained Child Protection Team? Do we screen volunteers who deal with our children (to prevent child abuse)? Do we know how to handle suspicions of maltreatment?

Kīrtanas and bhajanas

Do we provide guests with songbooks or display the songs on boards? Are the *kīrtana* leaders carefully selected, or is it *whoever*

grabs the mike first sings? Is the *kīrtana* allowed to escalate to unrestricted wildness, or are there considerations regarding the impression and participation of guests?

Speeches and presentations

Do we offer relevant, attractive, reasonable and respectful talks, or just rant in a boring, condescending, fanatical, or outlandish way? Are the speakers informed well in advance? Do we offer ongoing systematic training to regular visitors? Do we consider using audiovisual equipment to help people concentrate and retain the

information? Do we think of how to make our presentations more interactive and involving?

Edutainment

Do we offer dramas, dance-dramas, puppet shows, pantomimes, videos, poetry readings, storytelling, or other forms of educational entertainment?

Prasādam

How palatable and healthful is the food? Do we provide appro-

priate sitting arrangements according to age, comfort, and cultural background? Are the volunteers for serving *prasādam* properly trained and supervised, or is it a "*rāgānugā*" approach? Do we force people to stand in Soviet-style queues, or use more elegant, refined methods? Do we consider the concerns of health-conscious visitors and those unfamiliar with or allergic to intense Indian spicing? Are we attracting the legitimate disapproval of environmentalists by consuming tons of plastic plates, cups, and spoons? Is the system for sponsoring the feast effective?

Information about guests

Do we care to know how they felt about their visit, or does it not really matter to us? Are we trying to learn about our guests' interests and perceptions? Do we think about gathering names and addresses and the most appropriate way for doing so? Do we have a guest book? What is our plan for building our relationship with guests? What proposals do we offer them so they can continue associating with us and increase their interest, involvement, and commitment?

In this manner you can analyze all aspects of the Sunday program. And of course you can always seek advice from the guests themselves. You can also ask what they are willing to do to improve things. Tactfully engaging the guests, new and old, is a great way to make them feel needed and valued and to give them a reason to visit regularly.

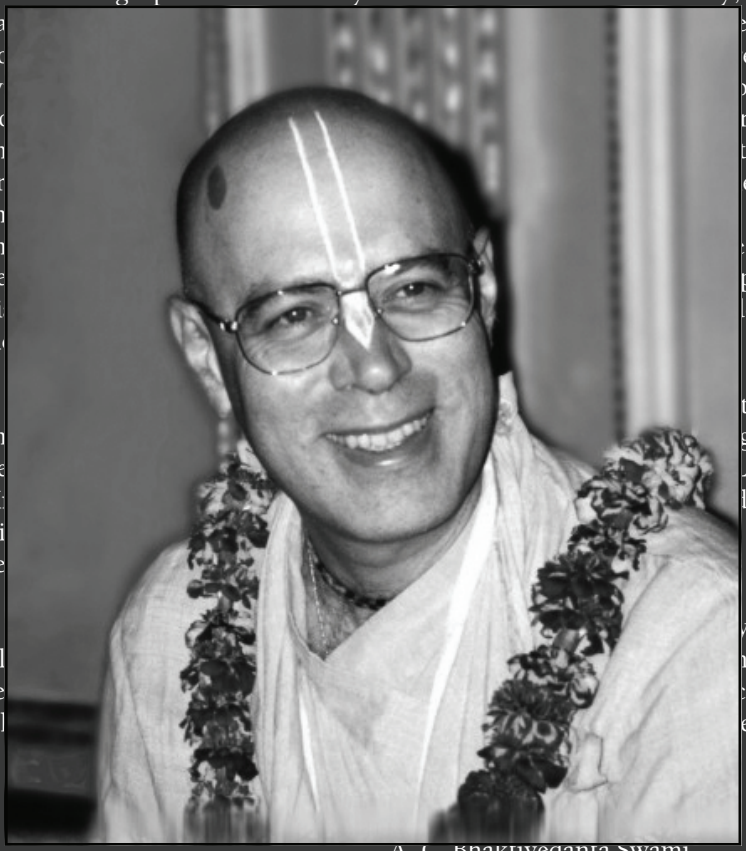
Appendix One

The Sunday Feast Prowess of Śrīla Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami Mahārāja

Kaaawa, Hawai, March 21, 1969

My Dear Tamala Krishna,

Please accept my blessings. Your letter dated March 18th by special delivery is in hand and it is so gratifying that you have already saved $600 for the improvement of the temple. So I am very much pleased. Go on working like this and Krishna will give you ample money-there is no scarcity. Regarding the change of altar, you can do it later on, but your making up the feast room you can take care of immediately, be-



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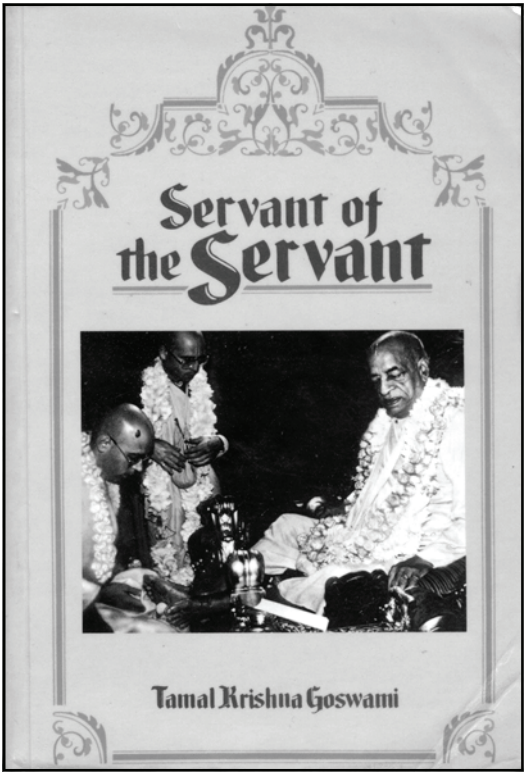
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Śrīla Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami Mahārāja suddenly departed this world on 15 March 2002. At that time we were publishing *Super Sunday* as a series of articles in the *Congregational Development Journal* and felt impelled to include a relevant remembrance. Although incapable of glorify all the services Śrīla Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja brilliantly offered to Śrīla Prabhupāda, we chose to share two extraordinary examples of his Sunday Program empowerment. Just as devotees offer to Mother Gaṅgā her own water, we attempted to celebrate the great Vaiṣṇava leader by offering him his own words from his book *Servant of the Servant*.



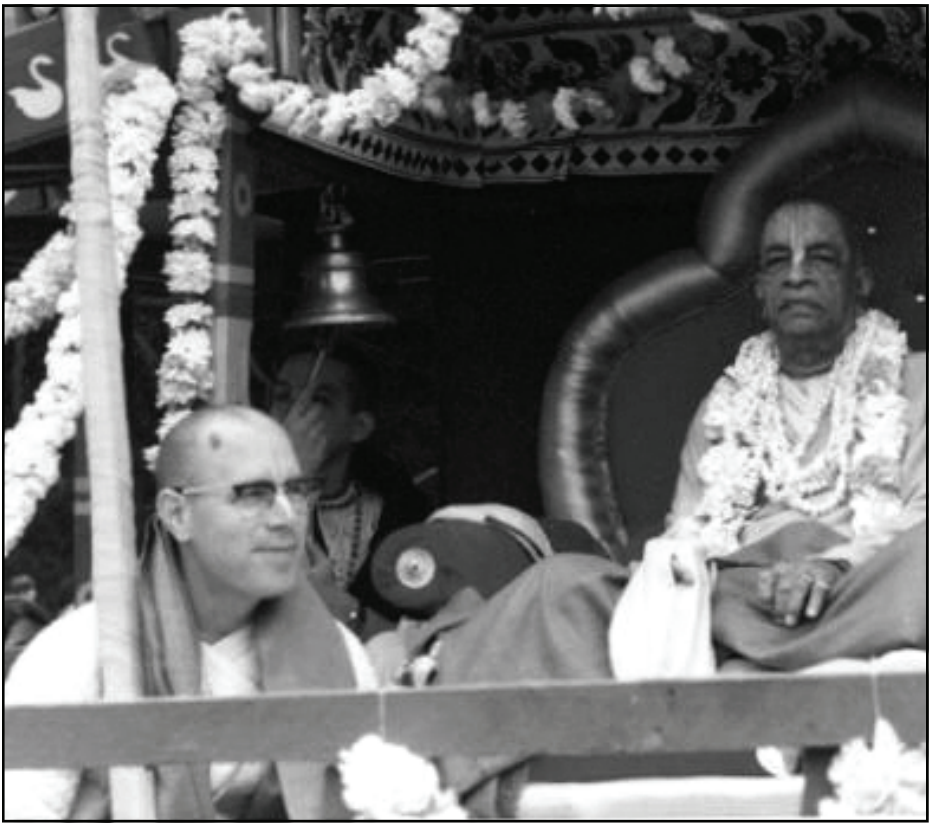
The first extract will show Mahārāja's sharp, innovative intelligence in action, successfully devising ways to improve the Sunday Program. The second describes what is possibly a world record—how Mahārāja recruited four new devotees for traveling book distribution directly from the public at the Sunday lecture.

From "The West Coast Days," Los Angeles, 1969.

Compared with our previous, material existence, life as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa was full of bliss. While in the temple, surrounded only by devotees, or on *saṅkīrtana* liberally offering Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the many conditioned souls we met, our mood was a joyous reflection of our new-found happiness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Our ecstatic chanting and dancing attracted the otherwise preoccupied shoppers in downtown Los Angeles, and as we stood in line playing our musical instruments, thousands of persons got the benefit of hearing Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy name. Viṣṇujana dāsa playing a *tambura* was especially attractive as he

swayed to and fro, singing very melodiously, reminding us all of the painting of Nārada Muni playing on his transcendental *vīṇā*. As people stopped to watch, we would approach them with *Back to Godhead* magazines and invitations to the Sunday Love Feast program.

One thousand invitations were distributed each week, with the contents changed to suit whatever play was being presented or special event being celebrated. This system attracted many respectable families in addition to the usual hippy crowd, so with Prabhupāda's permission, we began to charge an admission fee. For $1.25, a person could enjoy four to five hours of first-class entertainment: a play, *kīrtana,* a lecture, and at last a sumptuous fifteen-course feast. It was a bargain by any standard! Noting the enthusiastic response, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave full encouragement to my suggestions for further improvements in the Sunday feast arrangements.



Kaaawa, Hawai, March 21, 1969

My Dear Tamala Krishna,

Please accept my blessings. Your letter dated March 18th by special delivery is in hand and it is so gratifying that you have already saved $600 for the improvement of the temple. So I am very much pleased. Go on working like this and Krishna will give you ample money-there is no scarcity. Regarding the change of altar, you can do it later on, but your making up the feast room you can take care of immediately, because I understand that 70 or 80 people are coming to eat Love Feast. So if you decorate that room nicely, necessary equipment being there, it will attract more people. Regarding changing altar, I think you should postpone it for the time being unless you get Radha Kṛṣṇa Deity from India. Immediately there is no need of change of altar-when the Deity is arrived I shall give you suggestion how to do it. In the meantime, a throne may be prepared just on the sample drawing by Murlidhar. My thanks are due to Murlidhar for designing the throne which I have received. Here both Goursundar and Govinda dasi have very much appreciated the design, and they also convey their thanks to him. Your decision to fix up the feast room first is approved by me.

I think on the receipt of this letter you will be able to finish it by the 30th of March. Yes, perform Lord Ramachandra's Birthday as gorgeously as possible. Some of the particular functions just like Lord Krishna's Birthday, Lord Chaitanya's Birthday, Lord Ramachandra's Birthday, and Lord Nrisinghadev's Appearance Day, all should be observed very nicely.

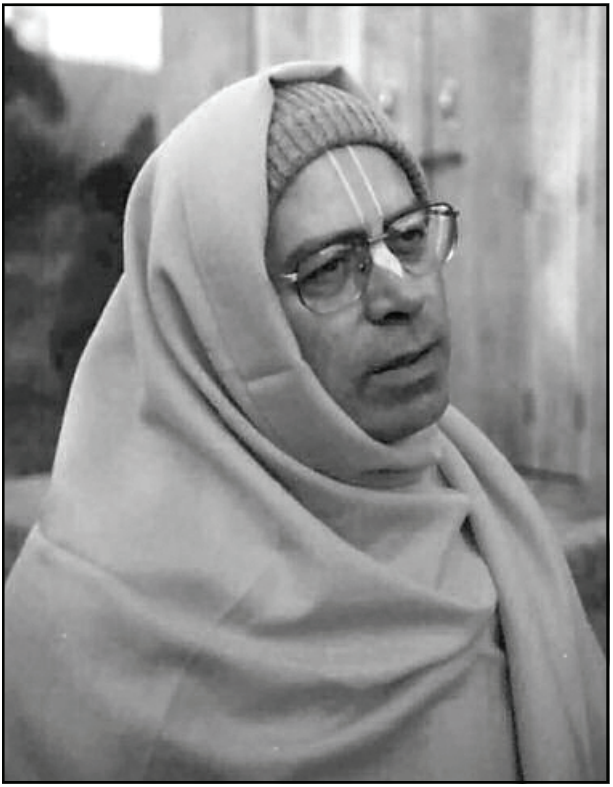
I am also very glad to learn that one Brahmachari has joined you. Please keep him nicely, because Maya's strength is very strong. I have received letter from Birbhadra and I am so glad that he writes so nicely. The certificate of his initiation is enclosed herewith. Hope you are well.

Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Having gained Śrīla Prabhupāda's approval, I planned out the improvements for the feast room with the help of Bhavānanda. We conceived an exotic scheme, covering the floor with oriental rugs, the base of the walls with multicolored pastel-shaded throw pillows, with silk canopies hung over the two doors leading into the feast room. Our Sunday guests appreciated the authentic, Indian-styled decor, and attendance at the Love Feast swelled.

Throughout the week we would rehearse plays dramatizing Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya's pastimes. While in college I had taken an interest in drama, and now I found that this could be dovetailed in the service of Kṛṣṇa. In Seattle I had sat with Śrīla Prabhupāda for several mornings at his house as he described the life of Lord Caitanya, which I was writing as a drama for our devotees to perform. Śrīla Prabhupāda very much appreciated our dramatic performances, as did all the guests. Although the plays were not very sophisticated-two devotees covered by a bed sheet became a cow-they were an enjoyable way of digesting the philosophy, and when Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Los Angeles, generally after each play he would speak about the subject which had been dramatized. We also put on puppet shows, of which the story of Prahlāda Mahārāja was everyone's favorite. Viṣṇujana portrayed such a furious Hiraṇyakaśipu that everyone became fearful, and Śrīla Prabhupāda said that his performance in that play was the best of all and told us that in his youthhood in Calcutta he had also been very active as a member of his school's drama club.



From "Dancing to the Bṛhad Mṛdaṅga," 1974, when Śrīla Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja was leading the legendary Rādhā-Damodāra Party.

Within a few weeks our entire party had been caught by the infectious mood of book distribution. Even the brand new *bhaktas* demanded a chance to try out for the part-time afternoon party. Now the problem became the shortage of vehicles, as well as qualified leaders to head the increasing numbers of aspiring preachers. A General Motors credit scheme solved the first problem, enabling us to immediately acquire three new maxi-vans. But there was no such bank from which we could "draw" devotees. Śrīla Prabhupāda desired that I organize hundreds of buses and vans filled with *sannyāsīs and brahmacārīs* to distribute books throughout America. He had not mentioned any zonal consideration, and I had given no thought to where we preached. Thus far we had been traveling freely for the benefit of all the American temples. The festivals we held were the best public relations and were laying the ground for making so many devotees in the future. If in addition we did book distribution, it was the temples once again that would draw the long-range advantage. Interested readers would naturally contact the temples, wanting to find out more about our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

By and large, all the temple presidents had been most cooperative and even eager for us to visit their cities. Many had even expressed the desire to associate more intimately by traveling with us for some time. Perhaps the G.B.C. men, recognizing the value of our program for all of America, would be willing to sacrifice some good leaders to help me develop the program. In the past, in matters which concerned all of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda had appealed to the G.B.C., as in the case of our India projects, when he requested that the G.B.C. select one hundred of their best men for preaching in India. The cause of book distribution was an all-ISKCON concern, and America the most important preaching field of all. It was not inappropriate, therefore, that I turn to my G.B.C. Godbrothers and request their help to make Prabhupāda's vision a reality.

Yogeśacandra recommended that I speak first of all to Rūpānuga Prabhu, the senior G.B.C. man in charge of the entire East Coast. Over the telephone I explained the situation to my God-brother G.B.C. We had made so many devotees; now who would lead them? Yogeśacandra had in mind Janārdana, a young, energetic *brahmacari* who had performed *saṅkīrtana* under him in New York. Though

not yet a leader, he had many nice qualities and with proper training would be able to gradually accept more responsibility. In a truly broadminded spirit, Rūpānuga gave his sanction for Janārdana to come.

Boston temple president Ādi-Keśava phoned to say that he was missing my association. Was there a possibility of our meeting? If I was agreeable he would arrange a weekend invitation from Gopījana-vallabha Prabhu, the New York temple president. Ādi-Keśava would also be there to give me all assistance in making some new devotees.

How could I resist such a fervent appeal? I sensed this unsolicited offer to be an arrangement by Lord Kṛṣṇa to help fulfill Prabhupāda's pure desire for hundreds of traveling parties. Without hesitation I immediately agreed. On Saturday I flew from Miami to New York, arriving in the evening at La Guardia Airport. Before driving to the temple in Brooklyn, I confirmed my return flight for early Monday morning. But not alone. Inspired by Lord Caitanya, I purchased four additional tickets. "Who are these for?" my hosts inquired. "Let us see," I replied, my eyes sparkling with preaching enthusiasm. "That is up to Lord Caitanya."

The temple room was filled to capacity with Sunday Feast guests. As I lectured, I carefully studied the faces of those young men who were listening most attentively. I spoke of the misery of material existence: where was the possibility

of real happiness for the nondevotee? And I attacked every conceivable variety of sense gratification I could think of, demonstrating the bitter reactions to follow. With whatever intuitive power Kṛṣṇa could give me, I tried to anticipate their false dreams of happiness and tried my best to smash them with the club of knowledge and detachment. The guests were disturbed and uneasy, but nobody was leaving. To hear the truth spoken authoritatively shatters one's illusions. They had come to be enlightened even at the cost of discomfort. With the tension at its extreme, I slowly released the pressure by unfolding the positive alternative offered by surrender to Kṛṣṇa. There was hope in this world of darkness if one took shelter of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Devotees did not live in the darkness of ignorance but basked continuously in the light of spiritual life. Kṛṣṇa consciousness placed one on the transcendental platform of eternity, knowledge, and bliss, even while one was still in this very body.

Looking directly at the best prospects, I told them of our Rādhā-Damodāra party. Why suffer through a winter of hell in New York? I had five airline tickets ready to go tomorrow morning to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It was eighty-five degrees there, with guaranteed blue skies every day. They could travel with two *sannyāsīs* aboard a Greyhound bus, seeing America while learning to play exotic instruments, studying the ancient philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā,* and having the best companionship they had ever experienced. The hooks set, I ended my lecture and retired to the temple president's room.

Gopījana-vallabha, Jayādvaita, and Pañcaratna had carefully surveyed the guests and now began to bring a stream of young men into my room one at a time. With Ādi-Keśava sitting next to me, I interviewed each to ascertain who among them had the fewest attachments and was ready to try Kṛṣṇa consciousness immediately. The questioning, preaching, and convincing went on past midnight. Two agreed, and at last a third. But that fourth person evaded me. A number whom I had spoken with said they needed time to think about it or to talk it over with their friends or family members at home. They had left me their numbers, so I had begun to call them, even though it was by now past midnight. Though I should have felt exhausted, Kṛṣṇa was blessing me with the perseverance to carry out His plan. I actually felt elated and fully enlivened by having preached nonstop for more than eight hours. I knew that if I continued with determination Kṛṣṇa had the fourth man waiting for me. And finally I found him, at home, still awake, thinking of taking up my offer, then hesitating due to other commitments. I asked him what those commitments were, and one by one I showed him how to get free from all entanglements which were holding him back.

By six o'clock in the morning I sent one of the devotees to pick him up and meet us at the airport. It was ecstatic. I prayed with deep reverence to the causeless mercy of Lord Caitanya, which had proven triumphant in such a miraculous way. I felt very grateful that Lord Caitanya had agreed to use me for fulfilling His will. Tired but blissful, this servant of the servant of Lord Caitanya led the four new men aboard the aircraft bound for Miami.

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Śrīla Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami Mahārāja *ki jaya*!

Appendix Two

The Sunday program: New Ideas, New Life
by Bhaktin Sara Bock

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The Sunday program: New Ideas, New Life

by Bhaktin Sara Bock

As a representative of the all-compassionate Lord, Śrīla Prabhupāda felt genuine love for all of Kṛṣṇa's parts and parcels, and therefore the Sunday program that he established is meant to embrace guests with a warm, memorable, heart-touching spiritual experience so they can feel the Lord's shelter and the joy of serving Him. If we continue striving toward that end, surely we will please our merciful spiritual masters and the Lord Himself. In our "pre-devotional" lives we relished working hard to meet so many goals—playing on the football team, throwing a surprise birthday party for our best friend, passing a final exam, etc.—so why not apply the same effort for making the Sunday program the best it can be? To accomplish this takes only a few enthusiastic leaders inspiring and bringing together like-minded devotees in a mood of love and service.

To improve our Sunday Love Feast and adapt it to the times we live in, we could gain valuable insights by observing the weekly worship services of other groups. In Los Angeles I attended services with the Mormons (Church of Latter Day Saints), Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and one Episcopal All Saints Church. Herein I present the result of this informal research, divided into the following areas:

- Location and number of Sunday worship centers
- Sunday lectures/sermons/discussions
- Greeting and treatment of guests
- Maintaining contact with new visitors

Other outreach programs

Location and Number of Sunday Worship Centers

> In this age of Kali the simple performance of saṅkīrtana-yajña—the holding of festivals as initiated by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness—should be introduced in every town and village. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.18.13, purport)

The first, strikingly obvious point I noticed was that plenty of religious organizations have centers of worship in nearly every town and village, whereas ISKCON temples are located mostly in major cities. Of course in the West we have not been around as long

as the other groups, but as time passes we could attempt to fulfill the "every town and village" prophecy of Lord Caitanya by offering smaller places of worship in every nook and corner of the globe (including devotees' homes). By placing centers of worship in more locations, we would facilitate other souls' coming to the shelter of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

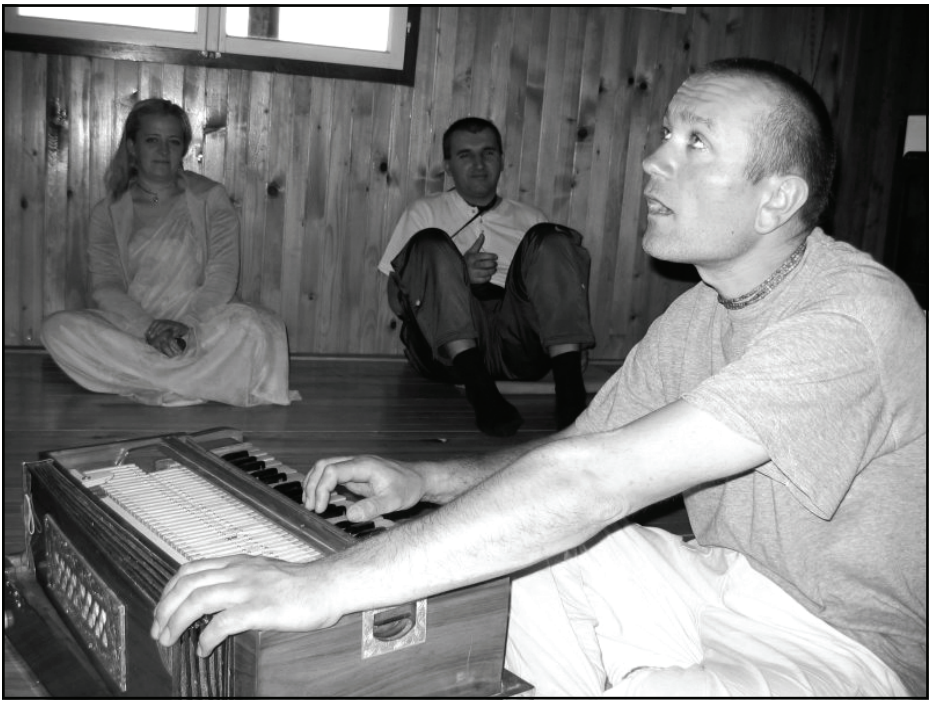
Mormon Temple in Los Angeles.

I find it crucial to emphasize that the weekly worship centers of these spiritual groups are usually not large temples difficult to maintain, but simple meeting houses. For example, the Mormons, like ISKCON, have their major temples located in large cities, but also have numerous smaller chapels in suburbs and villages. In West Los Angeles alone there are two or three to choose from. If one

looks in the Los Angeles phone book under their Church, he will find columns and columns listing their worship centers. And Jehovah's Witnesses have Kingdom Halls in numerous locations throughout Los Angeles. These halls are not exactly churches, but rather large meeting spaces. Even addict-recovery groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous rent simple meeting spaces for their weekly or daily discussions. The maintenance cost of such meeting places is often low and defrayed by the donations of attendees.

To host a weekly gathering of congregational chanting, minimum facilities would be:

- A room large enough to hold the expected participants—with plenty of dancing space.
- Musical instruments (and possibly a microphone).



- A kitchen for cooking. But if this is not feasible we could bring *prasādam* from our homes

Folding chairs or mats for guests to sit on.

To share Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement in every town and village does not require opulent Deity worship in each location, but rather simple meeting places. Alternatively, one's home can be used to invite others for chanting:

> Everyone can congregationally chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. . . . It is not that we have to open different centers all over the world. Whoever cares for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement can install Deities at home and, under superior guidance, worship the Deity regularly, chanting the *mahā-mantra* and discussing the *Bhagavad-gita* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. . . . Anyone can do this at home without difficulty, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu requested all the devotees present there to do so. (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛita*, *Madhya-līlā* 3.191, purport)

After living in the Los Angeles temple for two years, I experienced a shock upon moving into an apartment, working a job, and interacting more with the general public. Every day I saw hundreds of people stuck in traffic—many with looks of horror, depression, fear, or anxiety on their faces—trying to get to work on time (possibly to face even more stress and pressure from the boss) to make money. Los Angeles is so tremendously large that many people don't have easy accessibility to the ISKCON temple. To give people easier access to the holy name, cities like Los Angeles could have at least one small meeting center in each suburb.

Meeting places need not be a financial burden. They could be simple spaces rented out for a few hours of the week. In Los Angeles, for example, where rent and cost of living is very high, one suitable room downtown comes fully equipped with chalkboard, lec-

tern, chairs, tables, microphone, kitchen space, and security guard for just thirty-five dollars per hour. A small studio space in a lower-income area (equipped with chairs and tables) costs only fifteen dollars per hour (surprisingly, the one I checked already had a picture of Kṛṣṇa inside). A larger traditional church hall costs three hundred dollars per hour.

One example of creative use of space is the Gaura Yoga Center in Wellington, New Zealand, organized by His Holiness Devāmṛta Swami Mahāraja. The area serving as a temple room for the Sunday program is the same place used during the week for *haṭha-yoga* classes. To convert it into the temple room takes maximum one hour. When the *kīrtana* begins and guests are dancing in circles, one would never guess that during the week in the same place people were practicing deep breathing and relaxation. Again, the point is that a Sunday program does not necessarily have to

take place in a temple. Studios, private homes, or large meeting halls might offer a more familiar environment to seekers.

But perhaps temple managers fear that the proliferation of small worship centers will decrease attendance at their Sunday program. One solution: hold the smaller programs on a different time or day than the local temple; in this way people could attend both programs. For instance, in Los Angeles one devotee runs a small brilliant health-food restaurant cum preaching center. He hosts a program early on Sunday afternoons and then brings his guests to the temple for the evening program and for festivals. In the long run, smaller programs will actually bring more guests to the temple; and more guests means more potential community members, more donors, more potential preachers. Besides, we must remind ourselves of our real mission and purpose: to bring more souls to the shelter of Kṛṣṇa. To achieve that, we might need to move out from our comfort zone and do the needful.

ISKCON
Los Angeles

Sunday Lectures/Sermons/Discussions

> By hearing discussions between devotees, both the materialist and transcendentalist is benefited. The materialist is benefited by association with devotees because his life then becomes regulated, so that his chance of becoming a devotee or making the present life successful for understanding

> the real position of the living entity is increased. . . . The speaker and the audience are both benefited, and the *karmīs* and *jñānīs* are benefited. The discussion of spiritual matters amongst devotees is beneficial for everyone, without exception. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.22.19, purport)

Currently, the traditional Hare Kṛṣṇa Sunday program consists of a lecture given by one devotee to the entire congregation. This is typical also of traditional churches, mosques, and other religious structures. To bring alive the congregation, Some Churches engage them in small group discussions in addition to the traditional sermon, an "Adult Sunday School" approach. The Seventh Day Adventists church that I attended began the Sabbath worship with a forty-

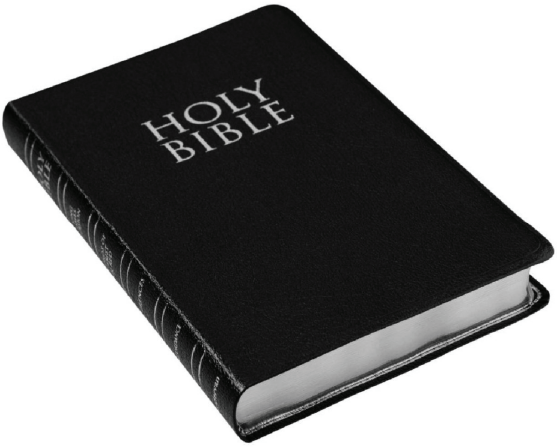
five-minute group discussion (ten to fifteen people in each group, with one discussion leader). Special groups were held for seniors,

singles, and teenagers. Some groups met in the large church hall, sitting in the pews, while others met in smaller rooms. As a study-book they used a practical guide to living as a disciple of Christ.

Discussions were on topics such as cleanliness, how to behave as disciples while at the workplace, how to maintain spiritual standards in social situations, about family matters, preaching work, and also about some biblical passages. It wasn't just philosophical, but completely practical for the congregation—how to live, work, and raise a family while being Christ conscious and helping the mission. It being my first visit, I felt relief to not be just a face in the crowd, but to be treated very personally (everyone in each small group gets to know any new person therein, and welcomes him warmly). After

the discussion, all groups join for traditional Sunday worship service, with hymns and sermon.

The Mormon Sunday service was divided into three parts—the traditional service with sermon and hymns, small-group Sunday School classes, and a gender-based class in which all ladies discuss service opportunities and support each other emotionally and spiritually. The men also get together and do the



same. All three sessions occur on rotation, to allow room for the large congregation: while one batch is in the small Sunday School classrooms, the second is in the main hall, and the third is divided into gender groups. On the first Sunday of each month (a fasting day) no sermon is given, and members have the chance to stand before the congregation and testify their love for and faith in Christ, and to share personal realizations and experiences.

Additionally, at one service I attended the Mormons used a small booklet for concrete guidance (following their rules and regu-

lations, chastity within marriage, prayer, etc.). ISKCON could also use similar booklets for individual study and for teaching small-group classes how to apply the philosophy practically.

The adult small-group Sunday School class allows for personalized dialogue and getting to know others in the congregation. Classes are held in small rooms with chairs and a chalkboard. The

teacher begins by asking students to introduce themselves, then leads the interactive discussion, which affords ample opportunity for questions. Could such small-group Sunday School adult classes be added to our Sunday program? Note that the large sermons continued—Sunday School classes were simply held before or after the sermon. People love attending because it's personal and interactive. Since people relish associating with peers, we could create special groups, such as a newcomers group, teenagers group, and college-student group, Small groups would also give more devotees the opportunity to engage their intelligence by leading a discussion; by teaching we ourselves learn, and by leading a group we learn to care more for others. If we also gear the Sunday School discussions toward practical matters (chanting *japa*, offering *prasādam,* remembering and serving Kṛṣṇa at the workplace, etc.) the attendees would benefit tangibly. Additionally, small groups prevent new people from getting lost in the crowd.

Both Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Scientists have organized a system whereby churches around the country simultaneously hold classes on the same subject, thus giving the congregation the opportunity to do their homework and come prepared to the Sunday service to participate and actively listen. The Jehovah's Witnesses print the *Watchtower* pamphlets, which include a section on preparing for the upcoming sermon. At their service, part of the sermon was interactive—the pastor asked questions for the congregation to answer and the microphone was passed around. The Christian Scientists have Reading Rooms, where people can read also about the upcoming Sunday lecture.

Greeting and Treatment of Guests

> In India the custom is that even an ordinary person is offered a glass of water if he suddenly visits and one cannot offer him foodstuff. If there is no water, then one can offer a sitting place, even if it is on straw mats. And if

> one has no straw mat, he can immediately cleanse the ground and ask the guest to sit there. Supposing that a householder cannot even do that, then with folded hands he can simply receive the guest, saying, "Welcome." And if he cannot do that, then he should feel very sorry for his poor condition and shed tears and simply offer obeisances with his whole family, wife and children. In this way he can satisfy any guest, even if the guest is a saintly person or a king. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.22.10, purport)

One All Saints Episcopalian Church had an impressive "welcome mat" for new visitors at their Sunday service: one booth was specifically for welcoming, and the volunteer in this booth greeted everyone who came (by name if possible) and was ready to introduce himself to the unfamiliar first-time guests. I was very surprised that he remembered my name when I returned a few weeks after my first visit. He asked me about my interests and introduced me to people who could further address my needs. Many tables were set up with small pamphlets

about the Church programs and service opportunities such as joining the choir, feeding homeless persons, small-group study sessions, seminars, special events, and festivals. There was something for eve-

ryone! Even those who aren't too much inclined toward religion per se could still get involved by singing in the choir, feeding the homeless, or baby-sitting the children, and still feel part of the community.

At the door of every church I attended, stood nicely dressed

ushers and greeters. They smiled and eagerly extended a handshake and a printed program of the day's service. One Christian acquaint-

ance of mine attended ISKCON's Sunday program, and although he enjoyed the *prasādam* and *kīrtana*, he wondered why he was not greeted at the door. This is basic Christian church culture, something we could possibly learn and implement.

Printed program leaflets are excellent communication tools. A typical one contains detailed information about the day's service: the time schedule, the words of hymns and prayers, the lecture's title, names of people in the congregation in need of prayer and care, the weekly opportunities for involvement, and the contact information. Especially since our songs are in Sanskrit and Bengali, printed words could help guests sing along and feel more involved in the singing.

The one and only unfavorable experience I had as a guest at a church involved being preached to very fanatically. I was told that I was worshiping the wrong God, and that their way is the only way. This put me off and made me think that we too must be cautious in sharing the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The churches I revisited were the ones where I had felt welcome and accepted and where opportunities existed to become an active happy participant in the congregation. Some people initially come to spiritual organizations not only for God but also for community, to find a sense of belonging. We can try to give guests a positive experience by welcoming them, befriending them, accepting them for who they are, and providing fun and attractive spiritual proposals for involvement.

Maintaining Contact with New Visitors

> By association with devotees, dirty things within the heart of a materialistic man are gradually washed away by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As silver becomes shiny by being polished, the heart of a materialistic person is cleansed of lusty desires by the

good association of devotees. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.22.20, purport)

After guests visit an ISKCON temple it would be very helpful to keep in touch with them. One Church has a tear-off section on their program leaflet on which guests fill in their name, address, interests, and phone number, to be added to the Church's mailing list. Having filled this out and received regular mail from this Church, I ended up attending more meetings and engaging in programs that otherwise I would not have known about. The mailings were not simply requests for donations; they were elaborate pamphlets offering ample opportunities for involvement and schedules of exciting activities and dynamic spiritual discussions. The key is to provide chances for participating and coming back. Nobody wants to be just a sitting member for long; we want to be active and be of service.

Other Outreach programs

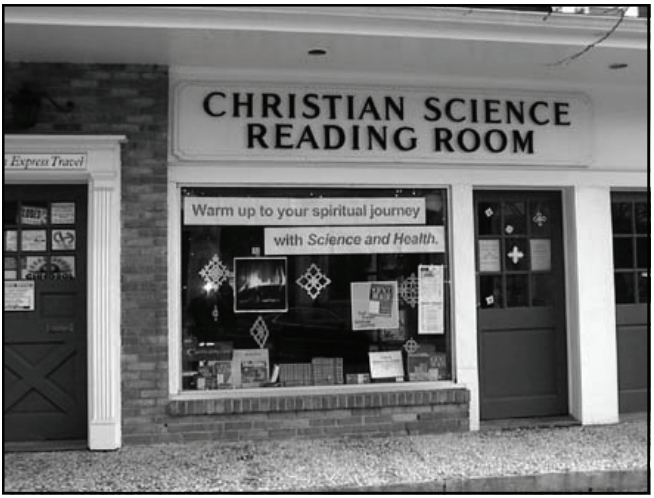
The expert devotees also can discover novel ways and means to convert the nondevotees in terms of particular time and circumstance. Devotional service is dynamic activity, and the expert devotees can find out competent means to inject it into the dull brains of the materialistic population. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.16, purport)

Reading Rooms

Books are the basis. Even if people do not come to temples, at least we should try to provide them an opportunity to study in depth the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda and previous *ācāryas*. The Christian Scientists are famous for their reading rooms serving a variety of purposes, one of which being to act as a bridge between the Church and spiritual seekers. Some people aren't ready to become

part of a religious group, but are interested to read spiritual literature; thus a reading room offers the chance to study without feeling pressure to join any group.

These reading rooms are funded by donations from congregation and others. Only one volunteer at a time is needed to keep the center running—to greet guests and direct them to books, tapes, and videos. Visitors can sit and study free of charge, listen to recorded lectures,



watch movies, and later purchase books if they so choose.

Imagine if ISKCON had reading rooms located in the vicinity

of every major temple—people not ready to visit the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple could come to read our books and learn about themselves and Kṛṣṇa. At least in America, people generally frequent coffee shops and are inclined toward self-exploration, but perhaps are a bit wary of organized religion; reading rooms would offer them a safe place to be introduced to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Such reading rooms could also host occasional free seminars.

Small Seminars

When I went for my first night of choir practice at The All Saints Church, I was surprised to see the beautiful setup of dinner

tables outside. I later discovered that two nights per week the church welcomes guests for a dinner meeting with alpha and beta classes. The alpha class is for newcomers to the Bible, and the beta class for the more seasoned. Guests eat together and get to know each other, then deepen their study of the Bible. This church impressed me as an active preaching center—not like a traditional church with its Sunday worship service, but as a happening place throughout the week for active people of all ages. They also offered small-group study program in people's homes–somewhat similar to ISKCON's Bhakti-vṛkṣa groups—and special seminars and lecture series covering stimulating themes and practical topics such as women saints, managing our money in service to the Lord, and having a God-centered marriage.

Conclusion

"Our ISKCON should be taken as being a family based upon love and trust." (Letter to Isana and Vibhavati, 21 September 1970)

In sum, the thriving Churches are those that care for their guests and congregation—by welcoming them, empowering them, respecting them, and encouraging them to practice from home. If we perform outreach activities but then don't care for those who do come to visit us, how many will stay? If we involve only those living in our temples but fail to empower the congregation as active members and preachers, how many will join? If we offer exemplary care to those who stay, many more will automatically come, because devotees will be happy and will naturally want to share their happiness with others. We mainly need to take to heart the instructions of the spiritual master, which include loving each other and speaking to others about Kṛṣṇa. If we care deeply about improving our Society, we might also learn from successful movements and thus

change our approach accordingly, rather than getting stuck in a routine out of habit or complacence.

Bhaktin Sara Bock has been involved with Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the past fifteen years, studying Śrīla Prabhupada's books, chanting, and attending temple programs. Sara lived in the Los Angeles and New Zealand ladies' ashrams for two years, and is currently active in prasādam *and book distribution.*